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‘And This is I:’ The Power of the Individual in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd

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‘And This I:’ The Power of the Individual in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd

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Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

—Dylan Thomas

For Robin, my brother
singing now unchained—
here it is.

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‘And This is I:’ The Power of the Individual in the Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd

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From the time she began publishing in 1954 to her death at 32 in a car accident about thirteen years later, Forugh Farrokhzâd composed poetry that challenged some of the most fundamental precepts of conservative, patriarchal Iranian society. She wrote openly autobiographical poems from a female perspective, poems that defied tradition in their unapologetic celebration of feminine sensuality, in their rejection of conventional women’s roles, and most importantly, in their emphasis on individual experience and self-awareness.

This dissertation posits the individual in Farrokhzâd's poetry as the essential measure of her internal and external worlds. To achieve my purpose, I examine eight poems through *explications de texte*, demonstrating how each represents a different facet of Farrokhzâd's treatment of the individual.

First, the introduction outlines the nature and relevance of Farrokhzâd's challenge to Iranian society as an outspoken female poet. It continues with an overview of critical approaches to the individual in Farrokhzâd's poetry, the role of the feminine, and an explanation of my use of the terms. The introduction concludes with a review of sociological, structural, thematic, developmental, and biographical critical writing on Farrokhzâd and her poetry.

The first four chapters cover poems that focus primarily on the individual in the context of her environment: "Tanhâ Sedâst Keh Mimânad" [It Is Only Sound That Remains] "'Arusak-e Kuki" [The Wind-Up Doll], "Delam Barâye Bâghche Misuzad" [I Feel Sorry for the Garden], and "Ay Marz-e Por Gohar" [Oh Jewel-Studded Land]. The next three chapters discuss poems with speakers who focus inward to a greater extent: "Fath-e Bâgh" [Conquest of the Garden], "Vahm-e Sabz" [Green Delusion], and "Ma'shuq-e Man" [My Lover]. Here we see some of the results of living by the principles expressed in the first four poems. The eighth chapter treats "Tavallodi Digar" [Another Birth] as an overview of Farrokhzâd's ideas about the potential of the individual, which ideas are reviewed and summarized in the conclusion.

The appendix contains the Persian and English texts of all eight poems above, as well as the texts for "Parandeh Mordanist" [The Bird is Mortal], which I discuss in the first chapter. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. The dissertation concludes with bibliographies of relevant critical works in Persian and non-Persian languages.

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Introduction

This dissertation deals with the importance of the Farrokhzâd individual, which is to say the individual as reflected in her poetry, especially by her speakers, and individuality as a principle that she advocates in her poetry. Except when stated, I do not examine Farrokhzâd's own individuality in my analysis.

Both in isolation and vis-à-vis society, the introduction discusses the challenge that the poet represented to Iranian society. An overview of the critical approaches to the individual and the role of the feminine in Farrokhzâd's poetry places social aspects of her work within the context of the individual. It argues for the need of an approach that centers her focus on individuality and individualism at the core of her worldview, as the foundation on which nearly every other aspect of her poetry is based. The introduction continues with an explanation of my use of 'individuality,' 'individualism,' and 'feminism,' and concludes with a review of critical writing on Farrokhzâd's work and her life.

In the body of the dissertation, I examine eight poems through *explications de texte*, demonstrating how each represents a different facet of Farrokhzâd's treatment of the individual. I chose all eight from her last two collections, because as I will argue, those poems reflect a more comprehensive conception of self, both independent of society and within a social context, than do her first three collections. The first four

chapters cover four poems that focus primarily on the individual in the context of her environment. I interpret them as setting forth the ideas about the relevance of individuality that govern all the poems covered in this dissertation. The next three chapters discuss poems with speakers who focus inward to a greater extent. They illustrate positive and negative outcomes of living by the principles set forth in the first four poems. The last chapter treats "Tavallodi Digar" [Another Birth] as a kind of individual manifesto that ranges across most of the major perspectives of all seven earlier poems.

I have not analyzed any of these poems from a structural or stylistic perspective because other critics have documented the significance of Farrokhzâd's modernist techniques. Examples are Ziâ' al-Din Torâbi's *Forughi Digar: Negâhi Tâzeh beh She'rhâ-ye Forugh* [Another Forugh: A Fresh Look at Forugh's Poems], an evaluation of the poet's metrical technique, and Mohammad Hoquqi's *She'r-e Forugh az Âghâz tâ Emruz* [Forugh's Poetry from the Beginning until Today], a broader stylistic analysis.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation, on "Tanhâ Sedâst Keh Mimânad" [It is Only Sound That Remains] (1966) deals with the speaker's self-identification as a woman who has abandoned social convention to align herself with principles that she associates with nature, such as creativity and freedom from conformity. Chapter 2 treats "'Arusak-e Kuki" [The Wind-Up Doll] (1964) as a warning against women allowing the destruction of their individuality, even if conforming to patriarchal norms promises security. In Chapter 3, I present "Delam Barâye Bâghche Misuzad" [I Feel Sorry for the Garden] as

suggesting that individual self-conception needs to take place within the context of the environment, represented here by an Iranian garden. Farrokhzâd's emphasis on the individual does not entail a lapse in consciousness of the outside world, even a lack of engagement with it, as her treatment of the mother and father in this poem makes clear. The inclination to self-absorption on the part of all four family members leads to the decay of the garden that the poem centers on. Chapter 4 argues that the numerous social ills depicted in "Ay Marz-e Por Gohar" [Oh, Jewel-Studded Land] (1963) are closely connected to the denial of personal identity represented by the assigning of a number to the speaker in the poem's beginning. Chapter 5 focuses on love as a driving force of individualism in "Fath-e Bâgh" [Conquest of the Garden] (1962), and its reward. Once again, Farrokhzâd pits the individual against social mores that she portrays as irrelevant and stifling. Chapter 6 examines "Vahm-e Sabz" [Green Delusion] (1962) and its illustration of both intense dedication to the principle of self-awareness in the pursuit of individuality, and the cost of that commitment. Chapter 7 turns to the representation of the beloved in "Ma'shuq-e Man" [My Lover] (about 1959), concentrating on its combination of tradition and challenges to tradition in highlighting the complexity of practical—as opposed to theoretical—individuality. Chapter 8 treats "Tavallodi Digar" [Another Birth] (1964) as a unification of Farrokhzâd's principal ideas about the potential of the individual. The conclusion summarizes and reviews these ideas as they have figured in the poems of the first eight chapters.

The Social Context

From the time she began publishing in 1954 to her death at 32 in a car accident about thirteen years later, Farrokhzâd composed poetry that challenged some of the most fundamental precepts of conservative, patriarchal Iranian society.[1] She wrote openly autobiographical poems from a female perspective, poems that defied tradition in their unapologetic celebration of feminine sensuality, in their rejection of conventional women's roles, and most importantly, in their emphasis on individual experience and self-awareness.

Given the autobiographical nature of her poetry, a brief overview of Farrokhzâd's life may add to a new reader's experience.[2] She was born to a middle class Tehrâni family on January 5, 1935. At the age of sixteen, she fell in love with an older, distant relative, Parviz Shapur. They were married, and shortly after moved to the city of Ahvâz. Her son, Kâmyâr, was born nine months later.

By 1954, she was traveling to Tehrân to arrange for publication of her poems. She had an affair with a magazine editor during this period, and the depictions of this relationship from a feminine perspective in the poems of *Asir* [The Captive], her first collection, met with scandalized criticism. By 1955, the year she published *The Captive*, Farrokhzâd had decided to leave her husband and child to become a poet in Tehrân. She had little contact with Kâmyâr after, and the pain this caused her is reflected in poems

[1] See Leonardo Alishan's "Forugh Farrokhzad and the Forsaken Earth," *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter Century Later*, ed. Michael Hillmann (Austin: Literature East and West, 1988).

[2] All biographical information is taken from Michael Hillmann's *A Lonely Woman: Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press and Mage Publishers, 1987), pp. 5-71.

such as “She’ri Barâye To” [A Poem for You] (1957), and “Khâneh-ye Matruk” [The Abandoned House] (1955). In 1956 Farrokhzâd published her second collection, *Divar* [The Wall].

In the summer of 1958, she began working for Golestân Studios. She and her employer, Ebrâhim Golestân, began a relationship that was to last until her death, which contributed to the disapproval she encountered from Tehrâni society. Since Golestân was married, with children, his time and attention were divided. This may have intensified the isolation that Farrokhzâd describes in such later poems as “Green Delusion” and “Another Birth.”

The years from 1959 to her death in 1967 were productive ones for Farrokhzâd. She studied film making, producing a successful documentary on a leprosarium called *Khâneh Siyâh Ast* [The House is Black]. She studied western languages and literatures, and experimented with acting in theater. The 1964 publication of *Tavallodi Digar* [Another Birth], her fourth collection, met with critical acclaim, and established her as an important contemporary poet. On February 14, 1967, Farrokhzâd was killed in an automobile accident. Her last collection of poems, *Imân Biyâvarim beh Âghâz-e Fasl-e Sard*,[Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season] was published posthumously in 1974.

Farrokhzâd made decisions based on her needs as a woman struggling to establish her individuality. Her lifestyle and her poetry reflected that, and she met with widespread criticism as a result. Her dialogue with Iranian society is of central importance in her

poems, evolving over the various stages of her work. Social alienation remains a constant, but the conflict magnifies her growing confidence in her sense of self as woman and individual. My analysis of poems from *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Coming of a Cold Season* argues that there is little distinction between her 'social poems' and her 'personal poems.'

As Ahmak Karimi-Hakkak and Farzaneh Milani point out, the significance of the feminine and the individual in Farrokhzâd's poetry provoked much of the criticism directed at her. That the feminine and the individual are significant is well documented,[3] but this dissertation will focus on important aspects of both that have yet to be addressed in depth. I will be treating the feminine as only one facet of the individual, and arguing for the individual as the foundation of Farrokhzâd's world view, rather than one of many equally important characteristics. The individual—agonized, isolated, and unsure, or soaring, in love, and confident—is the essential source of power and hope for society as well as for self. Her speakers describe loneliness, the pain of separation from a beloved or from the comforts of a conventional life. But there is no victimization. They make their own life decisions, assume responsibility for their circumstances, and insist that others do likewise. In poems centering on external experience, the individual emerges as the source of potential change, of hope. One child who can still imagine the sun, one jaded man who wants to believe in the song of a fountain: such often represent the only hope in

[3] See Farzaneh Milani's *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992) and Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak's *An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978.)

Farrokhzâd's increasingly bleak world view.

From the beginning of her writing career, Forugh Farrokhzâd's poetry provoked intense reactions from her readers. Her first volume of poems, The Captive, made it clear that a new voice had emerged: a feminine, autobiographical voice, unique in over a thousand years of Iranian literary tradition.[4] Either of these characteristics in a published work—feminine or autobiographical—would have been controversial in 1950s Iran, but together they constituted important innovation.

Perhaps most immediately, famously controversial were Farrokhzâd's frank descriptions of sexual yearning and experiences; Hasan Javadi writes that in her first two volumes of poetry, Farrokhzâd

> openly and boldly expresses her innermost feelings of love and sexuality. This freedom of expression is something we may take for granted, but for an Iranian woman of Forugh's time it was extremely shocking and daring. No poetess of Iran before her had spoken so candidly, and such explicitness as we find was in fact considered highly immoral.[5]

But Farrokhzâd's flouting of Iranian social mores went further than sexual self-expression. A woman expressing herself as a woman in public at all, much less loudly, autobiographically, and in print, was likely to meet with extreme reactions:

> In a literature where women are expected to guard their personal lives as solemnly as their honor, where censorship and the self-censorship that develops in conjunction with it are the order of the day, the awakening of a woman to herself, to her unique sensual, imaginative, and artistic potential, is bound to be controversial. In a culture where in the words of

[4] Michael Hillmann discusses reactions to Farrokhzâd's poetry and its place in the context of Persian literary tradition in *A Lonely Woman*, pp. 17 ff.

[5] Hasan Javadi, "Introduction," *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzâd*, (Emeryville, CA: Albany Press, 1981), p. 3.

> novelist Shahrnush Pârsipur, "people whisper even behind tall walls," a poetic persona who chooses to be open, trusting, and candid, who does not hide behind the shelter of stereotypes or standards of propriety, defies indifference.[6]

Farrokhzâd's focus and technique changed in the twelve years between the publication of *The Captive* and her death at 32 in 1967.[7] But her sense of self as woman and individual only intensified, permeating everything she wrote. Karimi-Hakkak notes that, as her poetry continued to reflect her experience of the world, and as she exhibited more modernist techniques, traditional critics consistently condemned her and her work. He describes the impact of this on her poetry: "The manifold conflicts of being a woman in a rigidly patriarchal society, of adopting a confessional poetic tone where tradition sanctions the spiritual and censures the sensual, and of being avant-garde in a society where the past is revered and canonized while the present is looked down upon form the backbone of Forugh's poetry."[8]

That Farrokhzâd felt these tensions acutely is reflected in the sense of alienation from her environment that her poetry exhibits. While this alienation remained in her poetry throughout her life, her poems suggest that society's influence on her sense of self changed as she grew older. During her early marriage to Parviz Shapur, Farrokhzâd had

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[6] Farzaneh Milani, "Nakedness Regained: Farrokhzad's Garden of Eden," *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter Century Later*, p.91.

[7] For discussion of Farrokhzâd's poetic development, see Mahmud Nikbakht, *Az Gomshodegi tâ Rahâ'i* [From Being Lost to Freedom] (Esfahân: Mo'assaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Mash'al, 1994) and Mohammad Hoquqi, *She'r-e Forugh Farrokhzâd az Âghâz tâ Emruz* [The Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd from the Beginning to Today] (Tehrân: Mo'assaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Negâh, 1993).

[8] Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), p. 18.

affairs with other men.[9] Her sense of guilt is reflected in "Div-e Shab" [Night Demon] (1955), from her first collection.

The poem depicts a woman agonizing between her role as mother and her "impure" acts that others condemn. As she sings to the child on her lap one night, a demon appears and tells her:

> "I am a demon, but you are more so—
> A mother, her lap stained with dishonor.
> Oh, lift his head from your lap
> Where the innocent child has rested it."
>
> The clamor dies away and in the fire of pain
> my iron heart melts.
> I sob, "Kâmi, Kâmi[10]
> Ah, lift your head from my lap."[11]

In this and such other poems from *The Captive* as "The Abandoned House" and "Ramideh" [Fled] (1954), the speaker expresses guilt or confusion because of the impact of her decisions on her son, and because of social repercussions to those decisions—whether to love outside her marriage or to leave her marriage and her son to become a poet in Tehrân. The captive of this collection has begun to leave the cage of her traditional life, but she doubts herself, finds herself susceptible to criticism.

Divâr [The Wall] (1956) sounds a more defiant note, marking a speaker more confidently adversarial in her interaction with disapproving people, and less conflicted

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[9] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, pp. 13 ff.

[10] In *A Lonely Woman*, p. 14, Hillmann notes that 'Kâmi' is a nickname for Kâmyâr, Farrokhzâd's son's name.

[11] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Div-e Shab" [Night Demon], *Asir* [The Captive], *Majmu'eh-ye Ash'âr-e Forugh* [A Collection of Forugh's Poems], Saarbrucken: Nawid-Verlag, 1992), 2nd ed. p. 49.

about whether she's doing the right thing. In "Shokufeh-ye Anduh" [Blossom of Grief], the speaker tells a beloved:

> Leave the dirty ascetics alone
> They call me disgraced in lanes and meeting places
> They stain my name with shame,
> they who are the creatures of Satan. [12]

"Pâsokh" [Answer] also reflects an increasing sense that love, for example, justifies unconventional decisions that benefit an individual and not society. A speaker tells her lover:

> God smiles on us,
> however many paths to the shore of his favor
> we haven't taken.
> Because, unlike the evil-doing, robe-wearing fanatics,
> we haven't drunk wine hidden from the eyes of God…
>
> If this fire that blazed in our hearts
> had fallen into the sheikh's lap,
> he would not have named us shameful sinners,
> we who have been burned by the sparks of love.[13]

By the time she writes the poems of *'Esyân* [Rebellion] (published in 1958, and written between 1956 and 1958), Farrokhzâd is on the attack, and challenging traditional concepts of God as well as restraints on her that society seems to have imposed in his name. "Esyân-e Khodâ [Divine Rebellion] (1956) opens with "If I were God…", and continues with the speaker's fantasy of what she would do if this were the case. In fury, she brings chaos to heaven and earth with fire, throws mountains into the sea with her

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[12] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Shokufeh-ye Anduh" [Blossom of Grief] *Divâr* [The Wall], *A Collection of Forugh's Poems*, p. 166.

[13] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Pasokh" [Answer], *The Wall*, pp.167-168.

hands, and opens graves to allow souls to inhabit bodies once more. After driving the ascetics from heaven, she says:

> At midnight, tired of divine asceticism,
> I would seek refuge in the descent of a fresh sin in Satan's bed.
> At the price of the golden crown of godhood,
> I would choose the dark and painful pleasure of a sin's embrace. [14]

Farrokhzâd's first three collections established her as an individual voice. Her poems suggest that she wasn't entirely sure of her identity at this point in her life, but they assign value to her existence as a person independent of any other. She stands alone as a woman, outside a role as mother, wife, or daughter. She is determined to make her anguish and her exultation heard:

> Throughout Farrokhzad's poetry we witness the development of a female persona whose complexity defies the stereotype: a woman privileged with emotional, psychological, and intellectual awareness, a woman contradicting prevailing notions of the "feminine," and asserting, with however much awe and confusion, her sense of her self as different from that conventionally defined as belonging to the woman.[15]

Farrokhzâd's last two collections, *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season*, were published in 1964 and posthumously in 1974, respectively. Poems from each, such as "The Wind-up Doll" from *Another Birth* and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" from *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season,* mark a shift in her conception of self and her relationship with her environment. While she

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[14] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Esyân-e Khodâ" [Divine Rebellion] *Esyân* [Rebellion], *A Collection of Forugh's Poems*, p. 227.

[15] Farzaneh Milani, "Forugh Farrokhzâd: A Feminist Perspective," *Bride of Acacias: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzâd*, tr. Jascha Kessler and Amin Banani (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books: 1982), p. 143.

frequently criticizes society and still places herself in opposition to it in poems such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains" and "Conquest of the Garden," her concerns are broader. In her first three volumes, she wrote about aspects of society that influenced her most directly, often without specifying them. In the title poem of *The Captive*, for example, the speaker describes herself as a bird captive to a jailer, and refers to the child who depends on her for his happiness. The reader deduces that she's actually imprisoned, separated from her lover, by society's expectations of her as wife and mother. When she directly criticizes society, she often depicts relatively superficial characteristics, such as hypocrisy and ostentatious virtue. In her last two collections, she focuses on what lies behind these, and other, negative aspects of society, and how they affect other people as well as herself. Mahmud Kianush states that after Farrokhzâd's first three collections of poetry, "instead of standing against society, she tried to understand it; instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great common spirit of mankind."[16] This assessment, while recognizing the increased complexity of Farrokhzâd's social experience, ignores the conflict between society and the speakers of such later poems as those noted above.

Kianush's evaluation also suggests a dichotomy where there is none: that in becoming conscious of "the great common spirit of mankind," Farrokhzâd is no longer "the voice of her individual world." Farrokhzâd's deepening sense of her own individuality obviously, famously informs her orientation toward her environment. Her

[16] Mahmud Kianush, *Modern Persian Poetry* (Ware, Herts: The Rockingham Press, 1996), p. 32.

self-identity doesn't develop in a vacuum. It develops within the context of her outside world, so that external and internal elements form a sort of dialectic. The synthesis: a more complex, aware individuality creating socially conscious, heavily individual poetry. Karimi-Hakkak describes one aspect of the dynamic when he writes:

> If organic poetry can be defined as that in which the content and the form seem to grow out of the poet's experience of reality, Forugh's poems are organic creations in which every word marks a step and the movement occurs between the two steps. This movement is the result of the continuous metamorphosis of personal experience—as well as social experience personally perceived—into words and forms...This sense of the uncovering of the self is the underlying element of the intensity of Forugh's social and political poems as well.[17]

Karimi-Hakkak says of *Another Birth*, "In these poems, the personal, confessional, felt element is successfully grafted to an overriding sense of social awareness. The result is a poignant, irresistible blaze of genuine poetry, at once private and public, in which the poet's unmarred fidelity to experience makes an immediate, ultimate effect."[18]

At the foundation of nearly all Farrokhzâd's poems, private or public, posing a more fundamental challenge to the Iranian society that read them than any specific criticism, is the presence of a female individual voice. The political poems of Farrokhzâd's last two collections attack tendencies particular to some segments of Iranian society in the 1950s and 1960s, such as wholesale westernization and its opposing inclination, the unquestioning clinging to tradition ("Oh, Jewel-Studded Land"). The poems also challenge more broadly applicable human inclinations such as the desire to

[17] Karimi-Hakkak, *An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry*, pp. 19-20.
[18] Ibid, p. 137.

find security within conventions and to attack those who defy them ("Conquest of the Garden"). But, as Milani points out, the mere existence of this voice renders Farrokhzâd's poetry political: "The personal and the political, the private and the social should not be separated in Forugh's poetry. Far from being mere "confession," the confrontation in poetry of a woman with her innermost experiences is a social and political act."[19] Leonardo Alishan sees Farrokhzâd's poetry as having had a profound influence on Iranian society as a result of her unification of feminine intellect and sensuality, a feat he argues "threatened the male's preconceived dualism which, for more than a millennium, had been imposed on the female half of Iranian society:"[20]

> Forugh's achievement affects every facet of Iranian life. Socially, women warrant equal significance as men…Politically, a regime such as that of Mohammad Rezâ Pahlavi (ruled 1941-1979) cannot ignore the feminine and creative aspect of life because it is preoccupied with pushing society to a GNP oriented "Great Civilization"…Socio-politically, since the Father in heaven loses his unique supremacy, the fathers on Earth lose their celestial archetype of the benevolent tyrant. Consequently, the "crowned" or "spiritual father" of the country, and with him, the father of the village or the tribe, and following him, the father of every family, has to arrive at an understanding that a healthy life demands a balanced approach to feminine and masculine principles and that the tyranny of the male over the female inevitably creates unhappiness for all, including the male.[21]

The inherently, simultaneously political and individual nature of Farrokhzâd's poetry is widely recognized by critics such as Karimi-Hakkak and Milani, as is the fact

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[19] Farzaneh Milani, "Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979), p.62.

[20] Leonardo Alishan, "Forugh Farrokhzad and the Forsaken Earth," *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter Century Later,* p.114.

[21] Ibid, p. 126.

that it is political precisely because it is individual and feminine. The poems of her last two collections usually center on individual experience, both inwardly focused and in the context of the outside world. That leaves room for disagreement about the nature of this individual experience, as well as the characterization of the individual in the first place. According to Amin Banani,

> It is true that the "self" of some poems is a reflection of the private world of the poet, while in others it is the society in which she struggles; but in the totality of her work the two dimensions are not separable. What bonds them together is the theme of alienation, from self and society, arising from helplessness of the individual to influence her society and personal life, and her struggles to achieve integration on both levels.[22]

Shortly thereafter, he refers to the "impotence of the individual" in Farrokhzâd's poetry, saying that it is "countervailed by her ability to think."[23] There is ample support in her work for his initial observations. However, a primary focus of this analysis will be demonstrating that the Farrokhzâdian poetic individual is anything but helpless or impotent, and that it is precisely her lack of alienation from self that renders her so. Farrokhzâd relentlessly holds the individual responsible for her own circumstances (see "The Wind-up Doll"). Her speakers frequently personify alienation from their environments, as noted above. They allow us to witness pain. But this pain almost always comes as a result of choices they describe having made, as in "Green Delusion," and they accept it, they face it; in essence, as I argue in the chapter on that poem, they control the pain. Although they may express nostalgia or a sense of wistfulness for the road not

[22] Amin Banani, "Introduction," *Bride of Acacias: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 9-10.

[23] Ibid, p.10.

taken, as the speaker of "Green Delusion" does, they do not express regret or blame outside forces for their circumstances.

Poems centering on social experience look to the individual—as opposed to political movements or the government—as the source of hope in addressing social and cultural ills. In Farrokhzâd's poetry, there is a correlation between lack of self-awareness and social decay. The poet makes this clear in poems such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains," and "Conquest of the Garden," where she depicts a restrictive, sometimes decaying atmosphere peopled by those who appear too engrossed in superficialities to recognize the conditions they're living in. Then she contrasts that setting with a speaker who has escaped her environment (frequently in favor of a setting in nature), and now declares herself an individual aware of both herself and her society's limitations. "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" conveys the same idea, in reverse; the speaker's loss of individual identity at the beginning of the poem lays the foundation for the litany of social problems that follow.

"The Wind-up Doll" depicts a series of women who have given up their individuality, having essentially sold it in order to live in what Farrokhzâd portrays as a comfortable stupor. This poem's speaker is far from ambivalent in her castigation of the subjects' hypocrisy, apathy, and materialism. The poem does not allow for their victimization; they have chosen what the poet depicts as a mind-and-soul numbing life, and Farrokhzâd draws a furious picture of the dehumanizing effects.

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The foregoing emphasis on individuality, the individual, and the feminine in Farrokhzâd's poetry, along with the variety of the terms' connotations, calls for some discussion of them. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an 'individual' is "A single human being, as opposed to Society, the Family, etc….Without any notion of contrast or relation to a class or group: A human being, a person." The OED defines 'individuality' as "the aggregate of properties peculiar to an individual: the sum of the attributes which distinguish an object from others of the same kind: individual character." According to these definitions, every human being is an individual. Since no two individuals are alike, every individual has individuality.

When I refer to the individual, or to an individual, I use the word in the generic sense that the OED sets forth: one person, as opposed to a group, or a society. Even this use has important repercussions in the framework of a society as patriarchal as Iran's.[24] But when I use individual as an adjective, as in "the individual nature of Farrokhzâd's poetry," it is in another sense of the word, also defined in the OED: "Expressing self-identity…" and "Distinguished from others by attributes of its own; marked by a peculiar and striking character."[25] My use of 'individuality' incorporates more narrowly focused characteristics, many set forth by Karl Joachim Weintraub in *The Value of the Individual*.

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[24] For a discussion of Farrokhzâd and Iran as a patriarchal society, see Hamid Dabashi's "Forugh Farrokhzad and Formative Forces of Iranian Culture," *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter Century Later*, pp. 7-35.

[25] Persian dictionaries did not define the Persian words *fardiyat* [individuality] and *fard* [individual] as I am using the English equivalents until the 1970s. This indicates that these connotations are modern, related to the development of ideas about the

In Weintraub's discussion of 'individuality,' the term is not equally applicable to every human being. Individuality is a "form of self that an individual may seek."[26] It involves a process, a willingness on the part of a person to question traditional models:

> The more a human being possesses a sense of ineffable individuality, the more he will, in moments of critical decision, ask himself: what decision would be truly an expression of my special nature? and the less will he find comfort in models. The objective to be yourself, in your own peculiar terms, demands that critical decisions be made in terms of inner needs and inner "laws.[27]

> The analysis proper [in *The Value of the Individual*] has been guided by the contrast between "model" conceptions of personality and individuality. This heuristic device posits, on one hand, the adherence of men to great personality ideals in which their culture tends to embody its values and objectives—and on the other hand, a commitment to a self for which there is no model…All such ideals share certain formal characteristics. They prescribe for the individual certain substantive personality traits, certain values, virtues, and attitudes. They embody specific life-styles into which to fit the self. They offer man a script for his life, and only in the unprescribed interstitial spaces is there room for idiosyncrasy.[28]

This characterization of individuality seems particularly applicable to Farrokhzâd and her major life decisions. Although poems such as "Green Delusion" suggest that some aspects of traditional life attracted her all her life, she chose against a life as traditional mother and wife to develop her potential as a poet. She maintained an eight year relationship with a married man. She struggled for a place in a society where there were no models for a woman who wanted to live and write as an independent individual.

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individual in the West. Thus, the use of English terms, definitions, and ideas, even if foreign in origin, seems appropriate in my consideration of Farrokhzâd's work.

[26] Karl Joachim Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. xvii.

[27] Ibid, p. 88.

[28] Ibid, p. xv.

Poems such as "Green Delusion" and "Another Birth" reflect the alienation she often experienced, while others such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains" center on her need to maintain conscious individuality in the face of pressure to conform.

According to Weintraub's paradigm, important as one's "inner needs and inner laws" may be in the development of individuality, simply flouting social conventions does not further the process. Consciousness of self constitutes a crucial element in the realization of an individuality. Weintraub refers to this in his deliberations on Abelard and Augustine:

> It is one thing to see that Abelard made it difficult for others with his aggressiveness, and that they in turn made it often painfully difficult for him to live; it is quite another thing to turn Abelard into one of those unique men who by his very being and work could not fit into the society in which he lived…Nowhere does he create the self-conscious impression of having engaged in an activity that was bound to create a conflict with the established order.[29]
> The point at question…is whether Abelard, when trying to justify his life, reflects in his own self-presentation that mode of self-consciousness, that idea of being a self which is involved in the notion of individuality.[30]

> The text in no way suggests that Augustine self-consciously thought of himself as a unique individual with the life task of translating his uniqueness from mere potentiality into actuality…In making the *Confessions* public, unique events were not merely being presented for their intrinsic value—the offering of a *typical* life had a didactic purpose.[31]

As noted earlier, the acute consciousness of self and the potential of the self in the absence of any example was a hallmark of Farrokhzâd's poetry at every stage, as we see in poems such as "The Abandoned House" and "It is Only the Sound That Remains."

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[29] Ibid, p. 86.
[30] Ibid, p. 74.
[31] Ibid, p. 45.

Individualism also characterizes much of Farrokhzâd's poetry, and I use 'individualistic' as the relative adjective. According to Weintraub:

> *Individualism* has to do with the conception of the appropriate *relationship* between an individual and society. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it, in contrast to collectivism, as "the social theory which advocates the free and independent action of the individual." It is, therefore, a social theory which desires that form of society in which the degree of social control over the individual is kept to a minimum so that the individual can pursue his course with the highest degree of autonomy. Individualism leaves men as free as possible to define themselves. *Individuality*, however, had best be restricted to a personality conception, the form of self that an individual may seek. It is entirely thinkable that individualism does not lead to an occupation with individuality. If, in a society dedicated to individualism, everyone freely opts for the realization of a common model…a society of homogeneous personalities may be sought which denies the value of individuality. The complication lies in the fact that a society of individualities, however, seems to demand the freedoms of a society devoted to individualism.[32]

Individualism and individualistic describe an individual's priorities centering on what is in her own best interests, as sometimes opposed to what is in the best interests of a group around her, be it family or society in general. This is relevant in discussions of Farrokhzâd's decision to leave her family for an independent life in Tehrân, for example, or in poems that are related to that decision.

Individuality and individualism do not constitute self-absorption and isolation from the outside world, as at least one critic has charged.[33] Poems in *Another Birth* and

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[32] Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual,* p. xvii.

[33] Joyce W. Warren, *The American Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1984), p.17. Warren takes on the individual and individuality in general, as well as in nineteenth century America.

Let Us Believe contradict this conception of individuality, with the development of self perception in them in constant tandem with social experience. Addressing the characterization of individuality as inherently incompatible with external interaction, Weintraub writes, "A genuinely historical understanding of the individual must ultimately rest in the awareness of a fruitful interplay between a self and the world it experiences. In a sense, the individual must come to perceive itself as the product of such an interplay. To value itself, it must also value its world."[34] Also, "A self…was a self by making its world a part of itself and itself a part of its world. The value of individuality lay less in its separate uniqueness than in its unique way of making itself a part of its world."[35] It is this conception of individuality that, I will argue, characterizes Farrokhzâd's last two collections.

Farrokhzâd's is an individual, autobiographical voice. It follows that a feminine viewpoint informs her poetry, as she stated in an interview:

> If…my poetry contains a degree of femininity, it is quite natural, due to my being a woman…Naturally because of her physical, emotional and psychological qualities, a woman focusses on problems that are perhaps not apt to be scrutinized by a man, and a feminine "vision" relates to problems that differ from those of a man. I think that for those who choose artistic work as a means of expressing their existence, if they try to make their sex a standard for their artistic work, I think they will always remain on this same level, and this is really not good. If I think that because I'm a woman I should talk about my own womanhood all the time, this would indicate a kind of stagnation and lack of growth, not just as a poet but as a human being…The essential thing is being a person. Being a man or

[34] Weintraub, p. 326.
[35] Ibid, p. 362.

woman is not the issue.[36]

Her later poetry reflects this perspective. It is imbued with feminine consciousness; in poems such as "My Lover," the speaker revels in her femininity and the masculinity of her lover, while in others such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains," she portrays herself as a maternal creator. Despite this and the fact that she challenges much of her social order in writing with an overtly feminine perspective, I do not characterize her last two collections as 'feminist' in the sense that feminist critics often use the term, because Farrokhzâd's outlook is more humanist[37] than feminist at that point. Again, it's worthwhile to explain my use of a term with multiple, often differing connotations.

Webster's Dictionary defines feminism as "1: the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" and "2: organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." A feminist is "one that advocates or practices feminism."

Research by Judith Harlan, although specific to the United States, illustrates the potential difference between these two definitions. According to Harlan, most people in the United States agree with the basic premise that there should be social equality

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[36] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Goftogu bâ Forugh" [An Interview With Forugh], *Jâvdâneh Zistan, dar Owj Mândan* [Forever Living, Remaining at the Pinnacle], comp. Behruz Jalâli (Tehrân: Enteshârât-e Morvârid, 1996), pp. 174-175. Translation by Hasan Javadi and Susan Sallée, *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad* (Emeryville, CA: Albany Press, 1981), p. 95.

[37] According to *Webster's Dictionary*, humanist and humanism represent "any system or way of thought or action concerned with the interests and ideals of people." A humanist focus, then, is broader than a feminist one, which is primarily concerned with women.

between the sexes (so that according to Webster's first definition, they would be termed feminists), but only a fraction of those people identify themselves as such.[38] Much of this may be due to the fact that, as the second Webster definition states, feminism constitutes "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." Feminist criticism tends to adhere to feminism as described there, practicing criticism as part of a political movement. Pam Morris, in her introduction to *Literature and Feminism*, writes, "This perception [of social injustice] provides feminism with its double agenda: to understand the social and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality and then to change them."[39]

Because feminism's goal is to improve the lot of a large group of people, but not everyone, applying the term to Farrokhzâd's later poetry can be problematic. *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe*, intensely individual at the same time that they address multiple social ills, usually focus on aspects of society that potentially affect everyone, not just women, and they look to the individual as the agent of change. Farrokhzâd's is not a call to women; it is a call to human beings. According to Hillmann,

> …in many of her poems from the late 1950s onward, Farrokhzâd's poetic personae no longer seem to represent merely her autobiographical self in the expression of feelings and views, but rather all Iranians with similar feelings. In other words, her feminine personae are transformed in these poems into a spokesperson, female to be sure, but voicing an anti-patriarchal clarion call that knows no gender.[40]

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[38] Judith Harlan, *Feminism: A Reference Handbook* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1998), p. 73

[39] Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 1.

[40] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 99.

And as Milani notes, "*Another Birth* (1964) and *Iman Biavarim* (1974), which make up the third stage of Forugh's work, portray personal emancipation and liberation from formal tradition…Leaving the orbit of "feminine" and "feminist" poetry, she emerges clearly as a "female" poet."[41]

The feminist literary perspective becomes more inconsistent with Farrokhzâd's later work when one considers the prescriptive nature of much of feminist criticism:

> Because of its origin in the women's liberation movement, feminist criticism values literature that is of some use to the movement. Prescriptive Criticism, then, is best defined in terms of the ways in which literature can serve the cause of liberation. To earn feminist approval, literature must perform one or more of the following functions: (1) serve as a forum for women: (2) help to achieve cultural androgyny; (3) provide role models; (4) promote sisterhood; and (5) augment consciousness-raising.[42]

Feminist critics do not universally endorse this list of qualifications in its entirety, and Farrokhzâd's poetry meets the first and fifth stipulations. But by definition, feminist criticism entails the evaluation of literature from a similarly prescriptive point of view. It judges a text literarily successful or unsuccessful in terms of how well it conforms to an outside agenda, rather than in terms of its own merits or lack thereof. The practice frequently results in myopic analysis, especially of any work (such as Farrokhzâd's) that emphasizes independent thought. For example, Morris criticizes one text "valued by

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[41] Milani, p. 101. For a discussion of strongly feminist poems from earlier in Farrokhzâd's career, including "Halqeh" [The Wedding Band], "Sorud-e Paykar" [Call to Arms], and "Beh Khâharam" [To My Sister], see Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, pp. 81 and 83-84.

[42] Cheri Register, "American Feminist Literary Criticism: A Bibliographical Introduction," *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, edited by Mary Eagleton (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), pp. 169-170.

feminists operating within a humanist framework for offering positive images of female experience" because it doesn't advance a specific political cause:

> Even though a realist text like *Daughter of Earth* offers a searing account of women's suffering, it may still seem to confirm a restricted unitary sense of individual identity and the binary opposition of male and female categories. As such it does not break apart the gender ideology which sustains a patriarchal order as natural.[43]

Much of Farrokhzâd's poetry challenges feminist doctrine. Farrokhzâd gloried in her femininity (indeed, in the differences between the sexes) and in her individuality, which some feminists would deplore.[44] Gynocritics—some of those operating more "within a humanist framework"—place less of an ideological burden on texts, but even for them, a text is not acceptable because of just any female experience. Farzaneh Milani has written convincingly on Farrokhzâd's work from a gynocritical perspective for decades[45] because she does not use a blanket approach to literature. She argues the significance of a woman's voice raised in the manner of Farrokhzâd's in a patriarchal society as conservative as Iran's, but she does not insist that every poem conform to feminist principles.

Even Milani, however, may ignore sections of poems that particularly fly in the face of feminist ideals. In one instance, she praises Farrokhzâd's "reversal of gender-

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[43] Morris, *Literature and Feminism,* p. 139.

[44] See Toril Moi, "Sexual/Textual Politics" *Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Mary Eagleton (London: Longman Group, 1991), p. 43, and Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, p. 136 and pp. 158-159.

[45] See "Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective," and *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992).

bound representation," noting that at times "the poet represents man as freed from masculine stereotypes and clichés. She portrays him with a distinctive individuality and physical presence…No longer compromised in his capacity for intimacy, Farrokhzâd gives this man new life by giving him clearer focus. After centuries of posing as the lover, man finally becomes the beloved."[46] In support of this characterization, Milani presents her translation of the last six stanzas of Farrokhzâd's poem "My Lover," which she translates as "The One I Love:"

> My beloved
> is wildly free
> like a healthy instinct
> in the heart of a deserted island
> he wipes the street-dust
> off his shoes
> with strips torn from Majnun's tent.
>
> My beloved
> like the god of a Nepalese shrine
> has been innocent from the start
> he is a man of bygone centuries
> a reminder of beauty's truth
>
> He always awakens
> like a baby's smell
> innocent memories around him
> he is like a happy, popular song
> brimming with feelings and nakedness
>
> He sincerely loves
> life's atoms
> specks of dust
> human sorrows
> pure sorrows

[46] Milani, *Veils and Words*, pp. 140-141.

He sincerely loves
a country garden-lane
a tree
a dish of ice-cream
a clothesline
My beloved
is a simple man
a simple man
I have hidden
in between my breasts
like the last relic of a wondrous religion
in this ominous land of wonders[47]

These lines do support Milani's argument. They portray an untraditional hero, one who can take refuge in a woman as well as demonstrating pleasure in such unheroic things as a clothesline. However, the first four stanzas of the poem—which Milani does not quote—introduce another aspect of the man. The dynamics between lover and beloved become more complex when we read:

My lover,
with that naked shameless body,
stands on mighty feet
like death.
Slanting, restless lines
trace his rebellious limbs
in their constant patterns.

My lover
seems to have come from forgotten generations,
as if in the depths of his eyes
a Tartar is always
lying in ambush for a horseman,
as if in the vital flash of his teeth,
a barbarian
is held rapt by the warm blood of prey.

[47] Ibid, pp. 141-142.

My lover,
like nature,
has a blunt, inevitable meaning.
In conquering me,
he confirms
the forthright law of power.[48]

The man is still in the position of the beloved, but he's much closer to traditional masculinity in other respects here than in the part of the poem that Milani discusses. He "stands…on mighty feet," and the speaker specifically notes his connection with traditional aggressive masculine identity in her declaration that he "comes from forgotten generations" as if a warlike tartar lay in the depths of his eyes and a bloodthirsty berber in the glint of his teeth. Perhaps most difficult for a feminist critic to address, unless in terms of condemnation, would be the last of the four stanzas. Milani states that "The "beloved" in this poem transcends sexual roles ascribed by literary tradition,"[49] but in this section of the poem the speaker describes her lover confirming the law of power by conquering her! This does not contradict the rest of the poem, but it does indicate that the piece is more complex than Milani's analysis suggests. It also exemplifies the difficulties that an ideologically committed critic faces. Milani makes interesting points about sections of the poem, but oversimplifies the poem as a whole, presumably because parts of it do not conform to a feminist argument.

Milani's humanist feminist analysis has been successful in documenting the significance of a defiant, female, frequently autobiographical voice in modern Persian

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[48] Farrokhzad, "Ma'shuq-e Man" [My Lover], *Another Birth,* pp. 325-326.
[49] Milani, p. 142.

poetry. However, the fundamentally prescriptive nature of feminist criticism sometimes results in some Farrokhzâd poems—or parts of poems—being either contorted or dismissed. From the beginning of her writing, Farrokhzâd defied convention to pursue and develop her individuality. Her last two volumes rarely conform to ideology, whether feminist on one side or patriarchal on the other.

In this dissertation, I am hoping to demonstrate aspects of the individual and the feminine in Farrokhzâd's later poetry that other critics writing on the same subjects have not. Other areas of critical analysis on these two collections include the sociological, structural, thematic, developmental, and biographical. The following critical review briefly describes important work from each category, although many studies are written from more than one perspective, of course.

As I outlined earlier, much of Farrokhzâd's poetry has political significance, both in its existence as a patently female voice in a conservative patriarchal culture, and in its criticisms of that culture. Critics have written extensively on Farrokhzâd's impact on Iranian society, as well as its impact on her. In "Forugh Farrokhzad and Formative Forces of Iranian Culture," Hamid Dabashi examines the relationship between patriarchy and charisma in Iranian society, and the ways in which Farrokhzâd's poetry "transcended the ideological confinements of her politically committed contemporaries."[50] Dabashi asserts that Farrokhzâd was able to use charisma to confront patriarchy in her poetry, thus forcing the two normally cooperative elements of Iranian culture into confrontation.[51]

[50] Hamid Dabashi, "Forugh Farrokhzad and Formative Forces of Iranian Culture," *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter Century Later*, p. 7.

Leonardo Alishân pursues a similar line of thought in "Forugh Farrokhzâd and the Forsaken Earth," in that he analyzes Farrokhzâd's challenge to patriarchy. As the passage from his article that I quoted earlier indicates, he discusses the effect of Farrokhzâd's unification of feminine sensuality and intellect on Iranian society.

Mahmud Âzâd Tehrâni (M. Azâd) has written on Farrokhzâd's life and work, and often focuses on her social criticism, interpreting those poems as more specifically engagé than a critic like Dabashi might. His representative articles on "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" and "It is Only the Sound That Remains" appear in *Parishâdokht-e She'r* [Poetry's Fairy Princess], Âzâd's compilation of biographical and critical articles by himself and others.

As I noted earlier, Ziâ' al-Din Torâbi and Mohammad Hoquqi have made significant contributions to the study of Farrokhzâd's poetry from a technical perspective. Torâbi's analysis in *Forughi Digar: Negâhi Tâzeh beh She'rhâ-ye Forugh* [Another Forugh: A Fresh Look at Forugh's Poems] is primarily metrical. He discusses the poet's metrical innovations, comparing her use of meter with that of other contemporary poets, line by line.

In *She'r-e Forugh az Âghâz tâ Emruz* [Forugh's Poetry from the Beginning until Today], Hoquqi focuses on word choice, documenting the frequency of dozens of words he considers of central importance in Farrokhzâd's poems. A thematic consideration of frequent motifs in her work follows, including observations on her treatment of such

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[51] Ibid, p. 33.

elements as night, love, and windows. Throughout his analysis, he discusses aspects of her work in the context of her poetic development, specifying the ways in which her style changes as she matures. After examining her influences and those she influenced, he concludes that she was the most modern and urban of contemporary Iranian poets, with a style conversational rather than structured.[52]

Mohammad Mokhtâri also approaches Farrokhzâd's poetry thematically. In *Ensân dar She'r-e Mo'âser* [The Human Being in Modern Poetry], he devotes a chapter to Farrokhzâd in which he describes stages of her poetic development as reflected in various motifs such as love, loneliness, self-awareness, simple common people, the sense of being alive, and the relationship between the external and the internal.

Az Gomshodegi tâ Rahâ'i [From Being Lost to Freedom] is a full length study in which Mohammad Nikbakht divides Farrokhzâd's poetry into three periods of development. The first, which covers her first three collections, he terms her lost, unaware period, characterized by traditional, clichéd language, conventional form, shallowness, and sentimentality. The second, which he calls her period of self-discovery and awareness, is comprised of her fourth collection, *Another Birth*. Nikbakht describes this period as the one in which Farrokhzâd develops her own style after a period of searching. By this time, she knows herself and her environment. All of her work after *Another Birth* makes up her third period, which Nikbakht refers to as one of freedom, of

[52] Mohammad Hoquqi, Forugh Farrokhzâd az Âghâz tâ Emruz [Forguh Farrokhzâd from the Beginning until Today (Tehrân: Mo'assaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Negâh, 1993), pp. 49 ff.

leaving the self behind. He writes that this period reflects philosophical progress, and that during it Farrokhzâd achieves enlightenment that sets her free as a person and a poet.[53]

Michael Hillmann's *A Lonely Woman: Forugh Farrokhzâd and Her Poetry* combines several of these approaches to Farrokhzâd's poetry. Primarily a biography, it makes the case for Farrokhzâd's life and her poetry being essentially inseparable:

> The metaphor has its limits. But if one thinks of poetry, specifically of lyric expression, as personal, individual, open, frank, intense, committed, unambiguous, full of the sights and sounds of its poet's time and place, full of the human content of all times and places, possessed of an indefinable purity, somehow sad even when voicing happiness—in whatever terms one conceives of poetry—it seems no exaggeration to see Forugh Farrokhzâd's life and life's work as lyric statement.[54]

Hillmann documents the major events of Farrokhzâd's life in the book's first two chapters, quoting regularly from her poems that reflect, sometimes document, various aspects of her experiences. Establishing Farrokhzâd's importance in Iranian society, Hillmann examines the feminine in her work, as well as its significance within her patriarchal culture. While he provides a literary, cultural, and political background to her poetry throughout the book, he intensifies his sociological focus in the last two chapters, arguing that Farrokhzâd's poetry and her life had a lasting impact on Persian literature. In his chapter on Farrokhzâd in *Iranian Culture: A Persianist View*, Hillmann also discusses the importance of her feminine, individual voice, especially in the context of Iranian literary history and culture.

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[53] Mahmud Nikbakht, *Az Gomshodegi tâ Rahâ'i* [From Being Lost to Freedom] (Esfahân: Moassaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Mash'al, 1993), pp. 8-9.

[54] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 142.

The individual and the feminine in *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe* have received attention from several of these critics. But none have approached the individual as the agent of change and source of hope in those collections, whether change and hope for society or for a single life. Female consciousness and perspective permeate and enrich much of Farrokhzâd's poetry. She could hardly speak autobiographically of her experience of self and the world without this being the case. The feminine is secondary to the individual, and this dissertation attempts to highlight human experiences—from love to creativity to the desire for artistic immortality—as aspects of the pursuit of individuality in Farrokhzâd's poetry.

I. "It is Only the Sound That Remains:" Replacing Models with Conscious Self-Identification

The extent of Farrokhzâd's emphasis on the individual becomes clear in light of the fact that most of her social criticism links progressive degeneration of the external environment with individual lack of self-awareness and responsibility. Much of this criticism in Farrokhzâd's last two collections takes the form of attacks on those who allow various segments of society to dictate their behavior, even to form their thoughts and inclinations, but this constitutes a widening of focus rather than a shift of emphasis from the individual to society. This chapter's analysis of "It is Only the Sound That Remains" focuses on Farrokhzâd's measure of humanity—and society—as the individual's capacity to live and love consciously and independently.

In much of her social criticism, the poet mourns the sacrifice of individual self-consciousness to a wide range of conventional lifestyles. In "It is Only the Sound That Remains," the speaker defiantly refuses to compromise herself by such a sacrifice, refuses to stop being outspoken, unconventional, the subject of gossip. Where poems from "Fled" in *The Captive* to "Conquest of the Garden" in *Another Birth* refer to gossip and social disapproval, "It is Only the Sound That Remains" specifically and contemptuously targets them. It portrays those who live their lives avoiding criticism of others as petty, and presents images of nature that contrast brilliantly with theirs. The

speaker's description of herself as a part of this world, which directly opposes that of society, represents a basic aspect of establishing individuality: the conscious evaluation of conventional models of thought and behavior, the rejection of those that don't meet one's individual needs, and the adoption of alternative principles when necessary.

"It is Only the Sound That Remains" begins with the direct challenge that recurs frequently in later stanzas: "Why should I stop, why?", and moves abruptly to short descriptions of various aspects of the earth, even the solar system in motion, as if to justify her as yet unspecified actions:

> Birds have gone looking for the blue side.
> The horizon is vertical
> the horizon is vertical, and movement: fountain-like
> and at the limits of vision
> spin shining planets.
> At elevation, the earth attains repetition
> and wells of air
> become tunnels of connection. [55]

Once in flight, horizons may be vertical. A bird flying straight up, as if toward the planets, moves like the climbing water of a fountain. The rotation of the earth, the repetition of the cycles of seasons, marks the passing of time, with wells of air connecting earth and the upper reaches of the bird. After creating this sense of vibrant vastness, the stanza closes with a reference to those whose consciousness moves on a smaller scale: "and day is an expanse/that the imagination of the newspaper worm cannot encompass." The last line suggests at least an example of the speaker's target. 'Newspaper worm' may

[55] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Tanhâ Sedâst Keh Mimânad" [It Is Only Sound That Remains], *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season, A Collection of Forugh's Poems*, pp. 440-444.

refer to those newspaper writers who so occupy themselves with gossip and criticism of what they can't understand, that they have no awareness left of anything more important.[56] The indictment of life on such a level continues in the third stanza:

> What can swamps be?
> What can they be besides a spawning ground for corrupt insects?
> Swollen corpses write down the thoughts of the morgue…
> And insects…Ah
> when insects speak,
> why should I stop?

The first two lines and the last of this passage continue the depiction of this segment of Iranian society as low, mindless creatures. Worms, bugs, and cockroaches crawl in the dirt, subsist on carrion and garbage, and produce many more like themselves. They are not conscious beings. Indeed, as the third line of the passage makes clear, they don't truly live. In the puffed-up corpses writing the morgue's thoughts, we see the newspaper worms again. Here it becomes apparent that even in their own fetid environment, swamp or morgue, they can't really live. If nothings like this write and talk, then the speaker of the poem feels no compunction to stop doing likewise.

The first stanza contrasts the grandeur of the natural world with the pettiness of those unaware of it, while the third depicts the depths of the worms and bugs' existence. In both stanzas, the speaker places herself in opposition to the ones she has portrayed as oblivious, and now she declares herself a part of the vital natural order which they can't sense: "I am a descendant of trees./Breathing stagnant air wearies me./A bird that had died advised me to memorize the flight." Once a bird has left a branch, its flight has left

[56] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 162.

the realm of the potential, and become limited. Once a human is born, she begins to die. The flight should be memorized, because it will end. This passage widens the focus of the poem even as it closes in on the speaker, by stressing another fundamental characteristic of Farrokhzâd's poetry as early as *Rebellion*: acute awareness of her own mortality.

In identifying herself as a child, a descendant of trees, the speaker takes her place as a participant in the grander world she has illustrated. She gives her immediate motivation in the next line, when she describes the effect that the very air of that other, small world of society has on her—the air left in rooms with doors and windows shut against all the splendor of awareness that the speaker associates with nature. In this context, the consideration of a dead bird's advice suggests not only the obvious consciousness of mortality, but also a sense of urgency which explains the speaker's perspective on a much larger scale. She can't live in a swamp, in a morgue, in closed rooms, being someone as confined as her bugs or worms, because as a mortal, she simply hasn't the time. As a human being aware of her limited lifespan, she wants to experience and appreciate on a larger scale. She considers both eternity in the turning planets, and transience, in the flight of a bird and her own existence.

Consideration of the flight also emphasizes the contrast between elevation and the ground as representing awareness and unawareness, nature and society, pettiness and vastness. One needs to look up and out to see most of the images of nature in the poem: the vertical horizon, rising like a fountain, the planets rotating, the earth itself raised, wells of air, the expanse of day; even the trees rooted in the ground reach skyward. This

established, the bird's admonition confirms the speaker's choice of worlds, as well as reminds us that our time is short; flight is vital, not newspapers.

Although not necessary to an appreciation of this poem, consideration of the same piece of advice in Farrokhzâd's "Parandeh Mordanist" [The Bird is Mortal] adds dimension to "It is Only the Sound That Remains." "The Bird is Mortal" reads:

> My heart is heavy
> My heart is heavy
>
> I go to the porch and draw my fingers
> across the night's drawn skin
> The connecting lamps are dark,
> The connecting lamps are dark
>
> No one will introduce me
> to the sun;
> No one will take me to the sparrows' party.
> Commit flight to memory--
> The bird is mortal. [57]

In the first poem, the speaker proudly, defiantly describes the way she has chosen to live and be. But "The Bird is Mortal" could represent the aftermath of her choices. Isolated, lonely, and seemingly hopeless, the speaker of this poem has even lost contact with the sun, which features so prominently in "It is Only the Sound That Remains." "The end of all forces is union, union/ with the bright essence of the sun/and pouring into the consciousness of light." The last two lines of the poem repeat the advice from "It is Only the Sound That Remains," but here it represents the flip side of the sentiment.

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[57] Farrokhzâd, "Parandeh Mordanist" [The Bird Is Mortal], pp. 445-446. My translation owes much to Hillmann's translation in the academic packet entitled *The Sound That Remains: Forty Persian Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad,* p. 72.

In the first poem, the bird has told the speaker to live conscious of her mortality. She is doing so by bursting out of conventional stale rooms and into literal and figurative light. But in "The Bird is Mortal," it is night; the day is done, the sun and birds are gone with no hope of reaching them, and the speaker is unhappy and alone. In this context, the reminder of mortality—spoken directly to the reader by a speaker who has quite internalized it—conveys a sense of despair rather than of carpe diem.

"It is Only the Sound That Remains," however, continues in a positive vein, with the challenge "Why should I stop?" issued for the fifth time, and an indirect portrayal of how the speaker actively opposes the social mind-set which she has scorned throughout the poem. She has already indicated that "Why should I stop?" has to do with speaking out in some way. "And the insect…Ah/ When the insect talks/Why should I stop?" Now she adds to her question: "I take sheaves of unripe wheat/to my breast/and nurse them." In giving from her own body to nourish life-giving wheat and bring it to fruition, she becomes a source of life, a maternal creator. The speaker is a creator, of course. We are reading what she has brought out of herself, what consists of herself. In so doing, she places herself again with vitality and nature as opposed to stagnant swamps and morgues, where she has placed much of Iranian society. In a more literal sense, her speaking, her poetry, offends those who write in Iranian newspapers—those who inhabit that world of closed rooms and pay too much attention to what other people think. This reasonably assumes that "It is Only the Sound That Remains" doesn't represent the speaker's first poem. She obviously does something on a regular basis that others object to. She refuses

throughout the poem to stop doing it, and there is no indication but the piece we are reading, of what she might be producing. The central role of sound also supports this conclusion.

In the second stanza, the poem's first reference to sound indicates that it comprises more than the speaker's poetry. But whatever it is that she is refusing to stop doing (the poem hasn't clarified that yet) is certainly a part of the sound which remains:

> Why should I stop?
> The road passes through the capillaries of life.
> The fertile environment of the moon's womb
> will kill the corrupt cells
> and in the chemical space after sunrise
> there is only sound,
> sound that will be absorbed in the particles of time.
> Why should I stop?

She asks her question, then describes that which produces life eliminating that which is anti-life. All that's left is sound, eternal in its relationship with the very fragments of time. She sees no reason to stop, because what she does is part of what lasts; it's part of time and planets, and it has to do with sound. The repetition of her challenge at the end of the stanza emphasizes the connection.

The next reference to sound makes the connection between the speaker's poetry (just established as such) and creative nature even clearer. Immediately after the indirect description of the creative process in which she nurses bunches of wheat, she says:

> Sound, sound, only sound
> the sound of water's clear wish to flow,
> the sound of starlight pouring over
> the layer of earth's femininity,
> the sound of meaning's embryo forming

and the expansion of the common mind of love
Sound, sound, sound, it is only sound that remains.

All these images represent fertility and growth: water supports life everywhere, but must bear particular vital significance in a country as generally arid as Iran, starlight pouring over feminine earth recalls ancient images of Father Sky and Mother Earth mating to produce the world, while the uniting of the essence of meaning and the expansion of a mind (consciousness) shared in love describes the speaker's (and Farrokhzâd's) creation of poetry.

The penultimate stanza summarizes the poem. First the scornful portrayal of small, oblivious people: "In the land of dwarfs,/the criteria of comparison/have always traveled in the orbit of zero.." Then the challenge, followed by the self-defining declaration of allegiance to the natural world:

Why should I stop?
I obey the four elements,
and compiling the constitution of my heart
is not work for the local government of the blind.

The passage emphasizes the inherent contradiction between obeying the four elements and allowing small-minded people to mandate her priorities, to rule her heart.

Finally, the speaker reminds us that her world does not comprise all aspects of nature, and that she has been discussing abstract, nobler principles of the natural world, rather than advocating life in a literal wilderness. There is, after all, nothing more a part of nature than animals in heat and worms moving through meaningless meat, but she explicitly distances herself from such purely instinctive (unconscious) ways of living:

What have I to do with the long howling of savagery
in the sexual organs of animals?
What have I to do with the lowly movement of a worm
in a fleshy vacuum?
The bloody origin of flowers has bound me to life.

The fact that she contrasts her commitment to living with what the animals and worms are doing re-emphasizes her characterization of them as not actually living at all. With the worms and bugs representing unconsciousness, aspects of nature both animalistic and aware feature in the poem.

The speaker of "It is Only the Sound That Remains" establishes herself as an individual in her resolution to remain on her chosen path of unconventional creativity. She evaluates her environment, evaluates herself and her unwillingness/inability to live in that environment, and describes the natural principles that she does identify with.

In "The Wind-up Doll," the poet warns of possible alternatives to the approach she illustrates in "It is Only Sound That Remains," in a portrayal of the lives of women who have not ventured out from the stifling rooms.

II. "The Wind-up Doll:" The Destruction of Individuality

Where "It is Only the Sound That Remains " centers on the human potential for self-awareness, "The Wind-up Doll" depicts women who aren't conscious or even thinking, women who are sacrificing their potential as individuals to men and convention. This chapter argues that "The Wind-up Doll" represents a demand that women take responsibility for their own individuality, in illustrating the various ways that they allow its destruction.

Like "It is Only the Sound That Remains," "The Wind-up Doll" centers on the emptiness of life half-lived in what it portrays as a stupor of compliance with social mores. Critics often characterize the poem as a feminist statement; Hillmann writes that "The Wind-up Doll" "examines everyday activities of educated, urban Iranian women and cautions them against acquiescing in the submissive roles for which society destines them."[58] This is, of course, the particular type of stupor that Farrokhzâd is warning against, but with the emphasis remaining on lack of consciousness, individuality, and finally vitality, the poem isn't primarily a thrust at the male establishment. Unlike Farrokhzâd's "Sorud-e Paykar" [Battle Cry] and "Halqeh" [The Wedding Band], "The Wind-up Doll" does not blame any outside party, even implicitly, for the way of life adopted by the series of women it depicts. The contemptuous tone targets them directly,

[58] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 81.

whether pseudo intellectual or women who frequent mosques, as individuals responsible for their own choices.

From the beginning, the poem attacks the emptiness of a woman's environment:

> More than this, ah yes,
> one can stay silent more than this.
>
> For long hours
> one can stare at the smoke of a cigarette
> with a gaze like that of a corpse, fixed
> one can stare at the shape of a tea cup,
> at a faded flower in a carpet,
> at an imaginary line on a wall. [59]

The first two stanzas immediately, specifically, establish the pallid silence and death-like atmosphere that permeate the room. The description of the woman's gaze (we can surmise she is female because of the title) as being like that of a corpse removes any possibility that this is perhaps just a contemplative afternoon. The vacant or fixed nature of her eyes says that she doesn't really see anything, and the fact that she does this for hours and hours indicates that she leads a stupefying existence.[60] Far from empathizing

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[59] Farrokhzâd, "Arusak-e Kuki" [The Wind-up Doll], *Another Birth,* pp. 319-322.

[60] In this context, M. Âzâd's interpretation of the poem as a reflection of Farrokhzâd's own loneliness seems questionable. He describes what he calls 'loneliness of place' in Farrokhzâd's "Dar Ghorubi Abadi" [In an Eternal Sunset]: "the loneliness of a garden lane which you and I are no longer looking at, which we have abandoned…" (p. 213), and goes on to contrast this type of loneliness with another, using part of the third stanza from "The Wind-Up Doll:"

> Farrokhzâd's loneliness is not an abstract one, but a natural, inherent loneliness, on this very night, on this very level, and in this very room. On this idle, futile day, it is raining, and one can:

with the woman's solitude, or even dwelling on it, the narrator criticizes her apathy, her lack of participation in what she observes from her window:

> One can draw the curtain aside
> with dry fingers, and
> watch the rain pouring down into the alley,
> a child with colorful balloons
> standing under an arch,
> a rickety cart rattling hastily
> out of the empty square.
>
> One can stay still there
> next to the curtain, but blind, but deaf.

Here, as in "It is Only the Sound That Remains," the outside world presents a vibrant contrast to the smoky, listless room. Inside, even the flowers in the carpet are faded. Everything in the room down to the woman's fingers seems drained of vitality,[61] but she

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> …with dry fingers,
> draw the curtain aside and
> watch the rain pouring down onto the alley,
> a child with colorful balloons
> standing under an arch. (pp. 213-214)

This use of the passage places Farrokhzâd within the very framework of a world she abhors, and misses the thrust of the poem as a rebuke to women who have chosen to experience so little. Of course, loneliness figures prominently in much of Farrokhzâd's autobiographical poetry, reflecting the isolation she experienced as a result of her non-conformity. Famous examples are "The Bird is Mortal," "Green Delusion," and "Another Birth." But the adversarial tone of "The Wind-Up Doll" clearly indicates that the narrator is describing a way of living she does not identify with. Âzâd's article appears in his *Parishâdokht-e She'r: Zendegi va She'r-e Forugh Farrokhzâd* [Poetry's Fairy Princess: The Life and Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd] (Tehrân: Nashr-e Sâles, 1997).

[61] Farrokhzâd describes the woman's fingers as 'khoshk'—literally, dry. In *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzâd*, p. 40, Hasan Javadi and Susan Sallée translate it as 'withered,' while in *An Anthology of Modern Persian Poetry*, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak uses the word 'wrinkled.' (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), p. 142.

opens the curtain onto a scene of motion, color, and sound, startling after the sluggishness we've just seen. The rain falling hard, the spots of color in the balloons bright against it, and the old cart moving away loudly and quickly, all invite involvement of the senses. But the woman remains oblivious: "but blind, but deaf."

Having established the barrenness of the setting and the automaton-like nature of a representative woman, the poem turns to specific instances of women's failure to live as individuals. The fifth and sixth stanzas illustrate hypocrisy and self-degradation in women's relationships with men:

> One can cry out
> in a voice clearly false and alien,
> "I love…"
> In the dominating arms of a man,
> one can be a beautiful, healthy female.
>
> With a body like a leather table cloth,
> with two large, firm breasts,
> one can pollute the purity of a love
> in bed with a drunk, a mad man, a vagrant.

Where the speaker in "It is Only the Sound That Remains" breaks out of society's confines to explore her own potential for growth as a human being and poet, women like this remain within conventional boundaries and essentially prostitute themselves in doing so. They make their bodies a commodity and are hypocritical about their feelings as well. The use of the word 'kâzeb' (false, lying) suggests that they behave this way consciously, and establishes their character as morally corrupt.

From emotional corruption, the poem moves to the intellectual and spiritual sterility of such women's existence:

One can cleverly ridicule every wondrous mystery.
One can become involved with solving crossword puzzles only
One can create a happy heart only
        with the discovery of an empty answer
an empty answer, yes, in five or six letters.
One can kneel a lifetime
with bowed head at the foot
        of a cold shrine.
One can see God in a nameless grave.
One can get faith with a worthless coin.
One can rot in the chambers of a mosque
like an old prayer reader.

The first of these stanzas attacks pseudo-intellectual habits that actually contribute to the stagnation prevalent in some women's lives. Serious consideration of 'a wondrous mystery' could bring a measure of life to their thought process, at least, could revive the fixed stare of a corpse. But the women she describes stay behind their curtains, even in their own minds, and limit their intellectual activity to the thoroughly conventional solving of crossword puzzles.

Equally futile is the thoughtless participation in religion that the next stanza dismisses. An automaton can undertake any of the first three actions without engaging mind or heart, and can rot in a mosque as a result. The passage depicts religion as centered on death, whether completed, as with the cold shrine and the nameless grave, or in progress, a living decay, as with the prayer reader and the woman. The poem continues with additional, contemptuous descriptions of women's lack of engagement and their consequent fading:

One can always get the same result,
like zero in addition, subtraction, and multiplication.
One can take your eye, in its angry lid,

for a colorless button from an old shoe.
One can dry up like water in its puddle.

The concern with a constant, predictable result emphasizes the lack of intellectual courage that we first saw in the ridiculing of mysteries. In large part, the poem centers on profound lethargy, the inability or unwillingness to break through inertia and begin actively living or even thinking. Here Farrokhzâd clarifies the reluctance; the conventional personality she is criticizing considers the absence of change a desirable state, and is willing to work to achieve it. The evasion of change extending to the refusal to even contemplate anything but the *status quo* suggests mental cowardice, a fear of what a new idea or concept might trigger. Operating with zero in addition, subtraction, and multiplication is secure in that the result is constant, and the scornful reference recalls a similar one in "It is Only the Sound That Remains:" "In the land of dwarfs,/the criteria of comparison/have always traveled in the orbit of zero." Small people, small minds, think determinedly in terms of nothingness. The result: death before dying, which the poet describes in the rest of the stanza. Eyes like colorless buttons evoke the fixed stare of a corpse from the first stanza, and the image of a person drying up (khoshkidan) like water in a container echoes the woman's already dry (khoshk) fingers pulling aside the curtains.

Avoiding any kind of self-introspection creates a void:

With shame,
one can hide the beauty of a moment
at the bottom of a trunk
like a laughable black and white picture.
In the empty frame of a day,

one can hang the picture of someone condemned,
or defeated, or crucified.
One can cover cracks in the wall with masks;
one can mingle with images still emptier than these.

Honestly experiencing the beauty of a moment requires a degree of the same type of courage that taking mysteries seriously does; in order to do either, a woman needs to face herself, drawing on her own experiences to interpret what she confronts, whether it be the consideration of an unknown or the deliberate savoring of an instant. Either action requires a kind of consciousness that would be impossible for someone living in the willful stupor that the women of "The Wind-up Doll" live in. Thus, they avoid the experience in embarrassment, as they would avoid looking at an unflattering photograph.

The elimination of so much from a life certainly leaves an empty space, as we see in the poem's initial stanzas, and in the later reference to "the empty frame of a day." In an attempt to fill this void, the woman turns to pictures of people in pain for stimulation, much as the jaded population in "Âyeh'hâ-ye Zamini" [Earthly Verses] does. In that poem, the speaker refers to their blind and dull souls, and then says:

Time and again at executions
when the hangman's noose
pushed the convulsive eyes
of the condemned out of their sockets,
they would withdraw into themselves
and their old and tired nerves would tingle
with a sexual fantasy.[62]

Only such an extreme spectacle can reach them, until the poem comes to the sole

[62] Farrokhzâd, "Âyeh'hâ-ye Zamini" [Earthly Verses], *Another Birth*, p. 342. Translations of "Earthly Verses" are from Michael Hillmann's academic packet entitled *The Sound That Remains: Forty Persian Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 35-37.

scrap of hope:

> But invariably on the fringe of the squares
> you would see these petty criminals
> who stood
> and stared
> at the constant flow of water fountains.
>
> Perhaps still
> behind the crushed eyes,
> in the depth of solidity,
> one half-alive, confused thing
> had remained
> which in its last-breath effort
> wanted to believe
> in the purity of water's song.

Although "The Wind-up Doll" isn't apocalyptic as "Earthly Verses" is, it does not offer even so much hope as this for such women's revival. They covers flaws—cracks in the wall and their lives—with masks, so they don't need to know they are there, much less contemplate them. The final stanza offers this vision of their future:

> One can be just like a wind up doll,
> seeing one's world with two glass eyes.
> One can sleep for years in a felt-lined box
> on lace and tinsel,
> body stuffed with straw.
> With every lascivious squeeze of a hand,
> one can cry out for no reason:
> "Ah, how happy I am!"

Sleeping for years in a box bears a remarkable similarity to being dead, and examination of the descriptions of eyes alone throughout the poem supports the idea that these women essentially are dead. The fixed stare like that of a corpse in the beginning, the eyes like "a colorless button from an old shoe" later, and finally, seeing "one's world

with two glass eyes" all characterize a windup doll, and they suggest that the comparison of the woman to a doll has as much to do with her lifelessness as with her biddable, conventional nature.

"The Wind-up Doll" focuses primarily on various types of self-betrayal by Iranian women, their refusal to actively engage in the world around them, to live independent, thinking lives with any integrity. Some of the women do betray themselves by taking refuge in the security that men offer, behaving as men might wish an ideal woman to behave; they provide warm bodies and the words they think men want to hear, and they exist in a sort of limbo until a man squeezes them to hear the correct recording. The initial stanzas of the poem could very well describe the literal scene of the figurative 'felt-lined box.' But it would be difficult to argue that submission to men is the essential danger that Farrokhzâd is warning against. The types of woman that "The Wind-up Doll" portrays have given up their souls and their minds to conform to society, and they no longer exists as individuals, even in the privacy of their thoughts. That is the essential danger. Their behavior is bad enough—corruption of love must be particularly heinous in a Farrokhzâd poem, considering the significance of love as a means of growth and self-awareness in her poetry, as represented by poems such as "Conquest of the Garden" and "Another Birth"—but by the poem's end it is clear that the women's loss of individuality results in the rotting away of their humanity. The women represented by the wind-up doll are no more human than the people represented by the newspaper worms of "It is Only the Sound That Remains," and although the means of their descent

may differ, the result is nearly identical.

"The Wind-up Doll" warns against allowing one's individuality to be destroyed. However, as the following examination of "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" indicates, stressing the importance of individuality does not imply that people have no responsibility to their immediate or extended environments.

III. “I Feel Sorry for the Garden:” Self Absorption vs. Self Awareness

In light of the fact that Farrokhzâd’s broader social consciousness played a much more important role in her last two collections than in her first three, most of the overtly engagé poems she wrote being composed in the early years of her career may seem ironic at first glance. Farrokhzâd rarely—and never as a mature poet—wrote poetry espousing a particular political movement or even ideal as a remedy for the social ills she saw and described in her work. As this chapter’s analysis of “Delam Barâye Bâghcheh Misuzad” [I Feel Sorry for the Garden] attempts to demonstrate, Farrokhzâd considered individual failings responsible for Iranian society’s problems, and she looked to the individual for hope in solving them.

“I Feel Sorry for the Garden” criticizes several different, relatively specific human tendencies, which all have intense self-absorption in common. It presents the social ramifications of individuals’ refusal to look up from the ground in front of them—whether they did at one time or whether it has never occurred to them—and it illustrates the distinction between self awareness and self interest. As in “It is Only the Sound That Remains,” “Conquest of the Garden,” and “The Wind-up Doll,” Farrokhzâd urges readers to be aware of more than their immediate personal affairs; self-awareness cannot be entirely distinct from the awareness of the outside world. She elaborates on this in an interview with Gholâmhosayn Sâ’edi and Sirus Tâhbâz:

> I do not condone taking refuge in a room with the doors shut and looking inward under those circumstances. I say that the abstract world of a person must come as the result of searching, observation and constant contact with her own world. One must look to be able to see and choose. When a person finds her own world among people and in the depths of life, then she can always have it with her and stay in touch with the outside world from within it. When you go out to the street and return to your room, the things of the street stay in your mind that are related to your personal existence, your personal world. But if you don't go out to the street, if you imprison yourself and content yourself with thinking of the street, your thoughts may not accord with the realities taking place on the street…Everything beautiful and everything that can grow is the result of life. One shouldn't yell [about it] or deny it. One must go and experience it, even its ugliest and most painful moments.[63]

The quote implies that individuals must constantly reinterpret themselves in terms of their experiences of the outside world; then they must be aware of and responsible for the environment they live in. Neglect of these responsibilities results in the degeneration of the individual first, and of society secondarily. "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" begins with the declaration that this neglect has already taken place:

> No one is thinking about the flowers,
> no one is thinking about the fish,
> no one wants to believe that the garden is dying,
> that the garden's heart has swollen under the sun,
> that the garden's mind is slowly being drained of green memories.
> And the garden's senses seem an abstract thing
> rotting in solitude in a corner of the garden.[64]

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[63] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Goftogu-ye Sirus Tâhbâz va Doktor Sâ'edi bâ Forugh" [Sirus Tâhbâz and Dr. Sâ'edi's Interview with Forugh], *Dar Ghorubi Abadi* [In an Eternal Sunset], edited by Behruz Jalâli (Tehrân: Enteshârât-e Morvârid, 1997), pp. 179-180.

[64] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Delam Barâye Bâghche Misuzad" [I Feel Sorry for the Garden], *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season*, pp. 426-432. Translations of "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" are from Michael Hillmann's academic packet entitled *The Sound That Remains: Forty Persian Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 56-57.

The first four lines establish the poem's target immediately. Not only is no one thinking about the garden, no one wants to believe what thinking might lead one to realize. The next five lines present the consequences. The garden (Iranian society)[65] is decaying, its senses (awareness) dulled. "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" is particularly Iran-specific, as the second stanza begins to make clear:

> Our courtyard garden is lonely.
> Our garden yawns in anticipation of an unknown rain cloud,
> and our pool is empty.

The courtyard with a pool does describe a typical Iranian garden, but, more importantly, "given the climate of Iran, such a garden is something that needs special effort to bring into existence and maintain."[66] In such a climate, as in "It is Only the Sound That Remains," water must be a medium of growth and fertility, so the empty pool suggests a barren atmosphere as well as neglect. The stanza continues:

> Inexperienced little stars
> fall to the earth from treetop heights.[67]
> And from the pale windows of the fishes' abode
> the sound of coughing comes at night.
> Our courtyard garden is lonely.

The description of the coughing from the pool emphasizes the garden's sickness, and the repetition of the stanza's first line, which frames the section and stresses the garden's

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[65] In his discussion of the poem in *A Lonely Woman*, Hillmann refers to Iranians' "garden of a nation," describing the family members as "stereotypes of educated Tehranis." (p. 122). Although M. Azâd reads the danger to the garden as more violent than I do, he also sees the garden as symbolic of Iranian society, with the family members living in unconsciousness of its condition. (*Poetry's Happy Fairy Daughter*, p. 277.)

[66] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 119.

[67] I will return to the significance of the stars in the context of a later stanza.

neglect.

Having established the setting, the speaker turns her attention to the members of the family who, as previously noted, may be interpreted as representing stereotypical educated people of Tehran. The withdrawn father comes first:

> Father says:
> It's too late for me.
> It's over for me.
> I shouldered my burden and did my share.
> And in his room, from dawn to dusk,
> he reads either the *Shâhnâmeh*
> or *Nâsekh ol-Tavârikh*.
> Father says to Mother: To hell with all birds and fish.
> When I die,
> then what difference will it make
> that there is a garden or there isn't a garden?
> My retirement pension is enough for me.

The father may have tended his garden at one point, since he says that he's done his share. At this point, though, since he thinks he no longer has an active stake in what takes place there, he turns away from it cursing to dwell on the glories of the Iranian past. Âzâd writes that "This is actually the prevalent way of thinking in a society deprived of involvement in politics and despairing of any change in its destiny."[68] The father's attitude does suggest despair, as well as indifference to the world outside his room. The inexperienced stars falling to earth already seems understandable, with elders like the father more concerned with the successful past of a society (as represented by the *Shâhnâmeh* and *The History of Histories*) than with the society's continued

[68] Âzâd, p. 279.

existence.

Where the father focuses on the past, the mother has her mind on another world entirely:

> Mother's whole life
> is a prayer rug spread
> at the threshold of fears of hell.
> At the bottom of everything
> Mother always searches for traces of sin
> and thinks that a plant's apostasy has contaminated the garden.
> Mother prays all day long.
> Mother is a natural sinner
> and she breathes prayers on all the flowers
> and breathes on all the fish,
> and exorcises herself.
> Mother is waiting for the coming
> and forgiveness to descend upon the earth.

Unlike the father, the mother does venture into the garden, but everything she sees belongs to a world that sins in its very existence. Another form of despair, her conviction that everything about the garden is corrupted by nature eliminates the need to improve it, indeed eliminates the possibility of doing so. Her life is contained, like the stanza, by concerns with hell and divine forgiveness; in her fear of the former, she suspects everything down to the plants, and in her hopes for the latter, she prays and blesses the garden. Neither suspicions nor blessings reverse the garden's degeneration, and since she appears blind to its condition even when she's looking at it, she has effectively turned her back on it as thoroughly as has the father.

The brother is an ineffective ideologue:

> My brother calls the garden a graveyard.
> My brother laughs at the profusion of weeds

and keeps a count of the fish corpses
that decompose under the water's sick skin.
My brother is addicted to philosophy.
My brother thinks the cure for the garden lies in its destruction.
He gets drunk and bangs on doors and walls
and tries to say that he is very weary and despondent and despairing.

Âzâd notes that "The brother is a social intellectual. A shallow person who feels no pain, but imitates suffering, he is irreligious, and his philosophy is an amalgam of the fashionable 'isms' of the day, from nihilism to anarchism. He has no knowledge or experience."[69] Hillmann writes that he "typifies the philosophical or intellectual dimensions of Weststruckness in his adoption of Marxism, which in his case is only skin deep."[70] The father turns away from the garden altogether and the mother despairs of it as being a part of a sinful world; both responses, while regrettable in that they abandon the garden to its decay, would seem to be genuine emotional reactions. In the brother—and later, in the sister—we see artificiality. The brother is ostentatiously engaged with the garden's condition, keeping track of the progressive stages of its decomposition, but he dramatically despairs of a remedy. The speaker describes the superficiality of his convictions:

He carries his despair
along with his identity card, pocket calendar,
        handkerchief, lighter, and ballpoint pen
to the street and the bazaar.
His despair is so small
that every night
it gets lost in the crowd at the bar.

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[69] Ibid, p. 281.
[70] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, pp. 122-123.

The triviality of his sorrow suggests that apathy may be more fundamental than real despair to his lack of interest in halting the garden's decline. Where he seems to take a perverse pleasure in concentrating on a process he has no intention of doing anything to reverse, the sister avoids the garden altogether, and reacts to it with disgust when she does come in contact with it:

> And my sister who was the flowers' friend
> and took her heart's simple words to their kind and silent company
> when Mother spanked her
> and occasionally offered sun and cookies to the family of fish…
> her house is on the other side of the city.
> In her artificial home,
> with her artificial goldfish,
> and in the security of her artificial husband's love,
> and under the branches of artificial apple trees,
> she sings artificial songs and produces real babies.
> Whenever she comes to visit us
> and the hem of her skirt gets soiled with the garden's poverty,
> she takes a perfume bath.
> Every time she comes to visit us,
> she is pregnant.

As a child she was sincere, with a genuine affinity for the garden and its inhabitants; now she is artificial, surrounded almost completely by artificiality, and her sole concern when she's in the garden is to avoid being contaminated by its poverty. Of all the components of the sister's life that the speaker lists, only her babies are genuine. That she still produces them regularly and they are still genuine suggests the hopeful possibility that some of them may avoid their mother's life and share a degree of consciousness with the speaker. There is no indication that the father, mother, or brother ever had any awareness of the garden except as a vehicle for their particular causes, and

the sister's loss of it suggests a diminishing of her.

As Âzâd points out, the sister does share one attribute with her mother:

> The mother and sister are two opposing manifestations of excess, one 'traditional,' the other 'modern;' both are obsessive. In the end, one is obsessive in avoiding sin, and one is obsessive about not becoming polluted by a 'poverty' with which she had once been entangled.[71]

Âzâd attributes the sister's transformation to an enchantment with the material advantages of her marriage[72]—in which case, Farrokhzâd would seem to be criticizing something of the same tendency on the part of Iranian women to sacrifice consciousness (both of themselves and of the outside world) for security that she did in "The Wind-up Doll." The sacrifice results in the sense of falseness that both "The Wind-up Doll" and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" attack. Hillmann describes another aspect of the sister's fixation:

> The speaker's sister epitomizes the artificiality and superficiality of Tehrân life in the 1960s when many urban Iranians seemed determined to discard their Iranianness and adopt Western ways and appurtenances as quickly as possible. The sister typifies the material dimensions of this much-observed phenomenon…[73]

As varying as the family members' focuses are, self-absorption characterizes all four:

> The fundamental problem in life for the family (=society), from the father and mother to the brother and sister (the old generation and the new generation) is their lack of motivation, of goals. All of them are in the chains of their own 'I,' and they do not think beyond their individual

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[71] Ibid, p. 282.
[72] Ibid, p. 281.
[73] Hillmann, A Lonely Woman, p.122.

profits.[74]

From the treatment of specific tendencies within Iranian society that are responsible for society's decline, the speaker turns to elaborations of that decline:

> Our garden is lonely,
> our garden is lonely.
> All day long
> from behind the door come sounds of shattering and explosion.
> All our neighbors plant
> bombs and machineguns in their gardens instead of flowers.
> All our neighbors cover their tiled ponds,
> which become unwitting secret storehouses of gunpowder.
> And the children along our street have filled their schoolbags
> with small bombs.
> Our garden is confused.

The initial description of the garden as 'tanhâ' [lonely or alone] re-emphasizes the fact that none of the inclinations the speaker has just detailed have anything to do with a concern for a greater good, and that the garden is essentially deserted. The widespread transformation of gardens into places of actual and potential violence that follows this must be particularly abhorrent when one considers the importance of gardens as places of refuge, inspiration, and self-awareness in Farrokhzâd poems such as "Conquest of the Garden," "It is Only the Sound That Remains," "Another Birth," and "Ân Ruzhâ" [Those Days].

Critics tend to read this section of the poem as prophetic, rather than applying to Farrokhzâd's Tehrân. Hillmann notes that "her description of gardens in which people have planted bombs and machine guns" is prophetic, and says "Because Pahlavi Era

[74] Âzâd, p. 284.

Iranians failed to cultivate their garden of a nation, it became a battlefield from 1978 onward…[75] Writing in 1979, Milani describes this passage as "virtually in prophecy of Iran's current events."[76]

While parts of the poem did prove prophetic, Farrokhzâd was describing Iranian society as she saw it at the time (as opposed to her fears for society which she wrote of in "Earthly Verses"), which seems to warn against an over-literal interpretation of this stanza. Âzâd, in his discussion of the fall of the stars ("Inexperienced little stars/fall to the earth from treetop heights") writes that "This is a clear, painful image of the disastrous martyrdom of "small inexperienced stars" who 'have filled their schoolbags/with small bombs.'"[77] That the stars do fall could be read as evidence that the children actually perish with their bombs, but this and the term 'martyrdom' implies a literally violent dedication to a movement or cause that is completely alien to Farrokhzâd's poetry. The stanza suggests rather the potential for violence, the readying of the neighborhood for more extreme forms of unrest than those they currently experience. Martyrdom of the stars would also preclude a reading of their fall as being a degeneration that mirrors the decline of all the other elements of society surrounding that image—a decline that is characterized more by a gradual rotting, a draining away of the positive, than by anything so dramatic as the explosion of a child's backpack.

One aspect of Âzâd's reading seems well founded: the association of the stars

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[75] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 122.
[76] Milani, "Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective," p. 124.
[77] Âzâd, p. 278.

with children. The small, inexperienced quality of the stars may remind some readers of children immediately, while the sister's development is an example of the diminishing of a child who once offered sun to the fishes, whose heart had simple words, and who was a friend to the garden. The lessening of her character parallels the garden's degradation.

In another poem about an ailing society, "Earthly Verses," Farrokhzâd writes of the same phenomenon:

> The sun had died,
> the sun had died, and tomorrow
> came to have a mute lost meaning
> in children's minds.
>
> They illustrated
> the strangeness of this old word
> in their notebooks
> with a large black dot.

The children forgetting the significance of the sun is symptomatic of that society's sickness, just as the sister's loss of awareness of the garden and the young stars falling represents one aspect of the garden's ongoing decay.

In the final stanza, the speaker summarizes her reactions to the garden's current state:

> I fear an age
> that has lost its heart.
> I am scared of the thought of so many useless hands
> and of picturing so many estranged faces.
> Like a school child
> madly in love with her geometry lesson, I am alone.
> And I think that the garden can be taken to a hospital.
> I think…
> I think…
> I think…

> And the garden's heart has swollen under the sun,
> and the garden's mind is slowly
> being emptied of green memories.

With members of society immersed in their own interests, there is little to bring to their attentions the condition of the garden they share—except possibly the poem now ending. The speaker communicates her fright at this state of affairs frankly, confidingly, as well as her sense of isolation in being conscious where no one else is. As Âzâd writes, "Apparently the poet is the only one who feels the decay and corruption with her whole existence."[78] Although the poem ending with two of the terrible images from the first stanza lends it an emphasizing frame of sickness, the message is not one of complete despair. The garden can be treated, and the very existence of the poem now ending may well constitute a part of the remedy. One conscious mind in the midst of obliviousness, one person who is calling to others, offers the possibility of bringing the garden's disease to the attention of many:

> Despite the negative situation represented in "I Feel Sorry for the Garden," Farrokhzâd does not view things as hopeless, because the speaker, another urban Iranian with the same background as her brother and sister, understands the problem and is sensitive to the garden's plight, that is to say, the plight of Iran. For her the solution lies within contemporary Iran itself, not in its past and not in wholesale adoption of Western ways, goods, and views. However, for her the solution is not political in the usual sense, that is to say, not a matter of organized political activity or groups, but rather a matter of individual Iranians living unhypocritical, meaningful, feeling lives.[79]

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[78] Ibid, p.277.
[79] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 123.

"I Feel Sorry for the Garden" ends with a lone voice of awareness that holds a measure of hope for society—a hope that is absent in the next chapter's subject, "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" [Oh, Jewel-Studded Land].

IV. “Oh, Jewel-Studded Land:” Beyond the Individual

Each of the three poems already examined here presents a society fundamentally, convincingly flawed at the individual level. Personal failings such as apathy, materialism, lack of consciousness of self and one’s surroundings, the failure to love, and the willingness to conform unthinkingly to social mores result in the stagnation and, in extreme cases such as “Earthly Verses,” the disintegration of both individual as such, and of society. Conversely, the potential for positive change at the individual level represents hope for society. This chapter characterizes “Oh, Jewel-Studded Land” as an aberration for Farrokhzâd, in that the individual is rendered essentially ineffective by a government’s systematic denial of individuality.

“Oh, Jewel-Studded Land” addresses the dehumanization of a population, the wholesale, uncritical adoption of western culture, pseudo-intellectualism, and the patriarchal system that overemphasizes the glories of the past—all frequent targets of Farrokhzâd’s criticism. But here they are external forces, over which the speaker can exert no influence; neither she nor any other individual can alter the world she describes, because they’re not supposed to be able to recognize that anything is wrong. Throughout the poem, in various contexts, the regular repetition of the speaker’s governmentally assigned number emphasizes the connection between the absence of a sense of self and the supposed absence of a sense of the environment. Adopting a heavily sarcastic tone,

the speaker imitates the unconsciousness she describes, but she records the actual, rather than the patriotic version of what she sees. In most Farrokhzâd poems, this would be a glimmer of light in the darkness, but the poem's ending suggests a basic incompatibility between an aware person and this society.

The poem opens with an attack on the governmental denial of individuality. The speaker has just received an identity card[80] and a number that represents dehumanization throughout the work:

> I've won,
> I registered myself
> I adorned myself with a name,
> in an identity card
> and my existence has become
> defined with a number.
> Therefore, long live 678,
> resident of Tehran,
> long live 678 issued at precinct 5.[81]

Only in the identity card does her life have meaning, and the number has replaced her name by the end of the first stanza. Bureaucracy has attempted to transform her, and this speaker sarcastically remains in the framework thus created. The number representing the loss of her individuality reappears regularly throughout the poem, indicating that the other characteristics of Tehran society that the speaker attacks stem

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[80] On page 51 in *A Lonely Woman*, Hillmann notes that the identity card is "the Iranian equivalent of a combined birth certificate and American social security number, and an indispensable proof of identity in which marriages and births of children are also recorded."

[81] Farrokhzâd, "Ay Marz-e Por Gohar" [Oh, Jewel-Studded Land], *Another Birth* [Another Birth], pp 378-385. Translations of "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" are based on Michael Hillmann's translation in his academic packet entitled *The Sound That Remains: Forty Persian Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 50-53.

from this fundamental flaw. Preoccupation with the past, the West, or artificially intellectual endeavors takes the place of what can stem from individual self-awareness: love, genuine creativity, even social responsibility.

The poem moves from the speaker's acceptance of her number to one of the primary distractions available to take her mind from this state of being:

> My worries are over now
> in the homeland's loving bosom.
> My pacifier: glorious historical traditions,
> my lullaby: civilization and culture
> my toy rattle: the rattle box of law.
> Ah
> My worries are over now.

The speaker 'joyously' takes up the distracting infantile comfort of patriotism; in focusing on the country's splendid past, one need not worry about whatever might be lacking in its present. Ostensibly reduced to the complacency and perception of a content infant, the speaker 'happily' describes the scene she encounters as she opens the window, reminding us again at the end of the stanza that she is possessed of a name devoid of meaning in the presence of her number:

> Overjoyed,
> I went to the window, and eagerly 678 times
> inhaled the air compacted with dung dust
> and the odor of garbage and urine.
> And on 678 bills
> and on 678 job applications I wrote:
> "Forugh Farrokhzad."

In other Farrokhzâd poems—"Panjereh" [Window], "Green Delusion" [Green Delusion], and "Conquest of the Garden," for example—windows are a connection to the

outside world. They often represent a point of focus for the speaker, a sharpening of her perception of both her current situation and the alternative possibilities outside. Sometimes they provide a means of escape from stifling elements of society. In "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land," the speaker looks out the window and accurately describes what she sees, but her impotent testimony can't be considered the kind of beacon that one aware individual constitutes in such poems as "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" and "Earthly Verses." Obviously the window provides no escape to another way of living.

The speaker next addresses a particular aspect of patriarchy: the assumption that whatever belongs to the past is inherently superior to corresponding elements of the present. Glorification of the past constitutes another patriotic distraction from the state of the present, and 678 traditional poets comply:

> In the land of poetry and roses and nightingales,
> it is a blessing to live, especially
> when the reality of your existence
> is acknowledged after years and years,
>
> a place where
> through the curtains with my first official look
> I see 678 poets,
> charlatans all of them,
> a strange beggarly company,
> searching for rhymes and meters
> in the garbage.

She 'gratefully' recognizes her good fortune in inhabiting a place of such romantic traditions, her bitter reference to the recent acknowledgement of her existence suggesting that these traditions were patriarchal, leaving women largely invisible. Her sarcasm vanishes in the next stanza, with the earnest indictment of 678 poets who uphold the

traditional order with their imitation of classical forms. She has 'eagerly' inhaled Tehran's stench, but there is no pretence of a positive reaction here, with terms such as "hoqeh bâz" and "hay'at-e gharib-e gedâyân" [strange, beggarly company] to describe those who devote themselves to what belongs on the rubbish heap.

The imitation of tradition becomes ludicrous in the next stanza, which gives a modern rendition of the nightingales and roses that represented Iran earlier in the poem:

> And at the sound of my first official steps,
> suddenly from the dark slime 678
> furtive nightingales
> who for fun
> have transformed themselves into
> 678 old black crows
> fly lazily toward the edge of day.
> And my first official breath
> mingles with the smell of
> 678 stemmed red roses,
> products of the great Plasco factories.

Nightingales traditionally pour out their hearts to the insensitive rose, just as classical poets appeal in vain to a beautiful, remote Beloved. Poets, nightingales, and roses all fare poorly in Farrokhzâd's modern scenario, with the traditionalists inhabiting refuse and the nightingales becoming harsh-voiced crows. The transformation of the roses introduces another aspect of Tehran's superficiality.

Where traditionalists cling to a past that is no longer relevant, other elements of society pursue western-style modernization at the cost of what is truly Iranian.[82] Roses, important in Iran because of their literary significance and the magnificent specimens that

[82] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 53.

the country produces, are reduced to lifeless, scentless plastic of no possible poetic or aesthetic appeal. Their only redeeming feature is that they are manufactured in a large factory, and therefore signify modernity to people of Iranian society who see anything modern as inherently superior. Proponents of both superficially opposing tendencies—clinging to the past and pursuing modernization through uncritical adoption of western culture and technology—err in their emphasis on uniform, artificial creation (or re-creation) based on ideology, rather than on consideration of Iran and its actual complex set of circumstances.

The speaker next turns her attention to a third propensity of Tehran's society, one that combines the penchant for westernization with pseudo-intellectuality:

> Yes, it is a blessing to live
> in the…city of superstar legs and derriéres and breasts
> and cover pictures and Art magazine,
> cradle of authors of the philosophy "so what?
> what's it to me? forget it,"
> cradle of IQ olympics—o my!—
> a place where when you touch any transmitter of pictures and sound,
> from it the brilliant blare of a young genius blurts out,
> and when the nation's intellectual elite put in an appearance at an adult education class
> their chests are decorated with 678 kabob cookers
> and on both wrists 678 Seiko watches
> and they are certain that weakness derives from empty pockets,
> not from ignorance.

The speaker lashes at a city in which people, like the blasé figure of "The Wind-up Doll," have grown apathetic in their world view, refusing to engage the city and its problems in favor of a succession of female body parts. The intelligentsia has sold out to western materialism; even they measure success in terms of money, rather than knowledge, and

they proudly bear evidences of foreign or foreign inspired progress on their persons, complete with the identity-destroying number 678.

The focus now returns to the speaker herself, and her experience of the world she may experience fully, now that she's an official part of it:

> I won, yes I
> Now in celebration of this victory
> in front of the mirror,
> with pride I light 678 candles bought on credit
> and leap onto the mantle so that,
> with your permission,
> I might address a few words to you
> concerning the legal advantages of life
> and to the resonance of enthusiastic applause
> break ground with the pickaxe
> on the part at the top of my head
> for the lofty edifice of my life.

The stanza serves as an introduction to the rest of the poem and the rest of her life. With a reference to the 678 candles that she has, in accordance with western practice, bought on credit, she 'proudly' notes the beginning of her new life, declaring her intention of recounting its 'legal advantages.' The ending of the poem is foreshadowed by the speaker's determination to begin construction of her future by taking a pickaxe to the part of her hair.

Each of the four advantages that the speaker of "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" now lists represents an available substitution for both self-awareness and awareness of the world around her, much as each family member in "Delam Barâye Bâghcheh Misuzad" embodies a mindset that enables him or her to ignore the garden's decay. Each advantage constitutes a stanza, and all four stanzas begin with "As of tomorrow I can…," which

unifies them and emphasizes their common purpose.

The first advantage is superficiality, echoing the preoccupation with cover girls earlier in the poem:

> As of tomorrow,
> in the city's side streets
> brimming with national blessings
> and in the lighthearted shadows of telegraph poles,
> I'll stroll along and proudly write on lavatory walls 678 times:
> "I wrote this line to make donkeys laugh."

Because of the sarcastic tone already established, the speaker need not go into any detail about what kind of blessings the side streets might be brimming with, especially given her earlier descriptions of the stench and the piles of refuse in the streets. Engaging in such mindless activity 678 times would occupy one's time and attention to such an extent as to render consciousness—much less contemplation or engagement—of the environment and one's place in it impossible. The number 678 raises the question of whether enough sense of self would remain to enable any such considerations.

Patriotic materialism follows in the list of distractions:

> As of tomorrow like a zealous patriot
> I'll have in heart and mind a share in the great ideal
> that society every Wednesday afternoon follows with anxious excitement,
> a share of those 1,000-riyal notes
> which can be used for refrigerators, furniture, and curtains
> or which for 678 natural votes can be donated one evening to 678 patriotic men.

The stanza portrays the national focus on the weekly lottery as not just a past-time, but also an adherence to a principle; materialism is the positive model for patriotic citizens who are willing to sell their votes as well as their identities. The scenario

suggests the difficulty of maintaining individual integrity or awareness in a society so uniform in its lack of concern with anything but the superficial.

The retreat into ready-made pseudo-intellectualism also renders genuine consciousness of self and environment unnecessary, if not impossible:

> As of tomorrow at the back of Khâchik's shop
> after inhaling several snorts of a few grams of first hand pure stuff
> and consuming several not-so-pure pepsis
> and uttering several Sufi exclamations,
> I'll officially join the association of prominent pensive learned people
> and enlightened erudite excrement
> and followers of the school of la-dee-da
> and scribble the plot outline of my first great novel
> which around the year 1678 Shamsi-e Tabrizi
> will be formally submitted to a bankrupt press
> on both sides of 678 packs of genuine Vizheh Oshno cigarettes.

The passage illustrates both the pretentiousness and ineffectiveness of these would-be intellectuals. After blunting whatever faculties they're possessed of with chemical substances and drinking western soda, they imitate mystic Sufi behavior in the recitation of nonsense. (The Persian lists the exclamations—several "ya haqs and ya hos and dagh daghs and ho hos;" by the end of the line the expressions are meaningless.) Shams-e Tabriz was Rumi, the important mystic Iranian poet of the thirteenth century. A novel with a planned completion date of the year 1678 after his life is unlikely to materialize, with a bankrupt press unlikely to print it should it do so. The fact that it's written on a cheap brand of cigarette packs reflects its quality.[83]

This artificial, pretentious substitution for creativity, described in such a sarcastic

[83] Hillmann notes that Vizheh Oshno was "the cheapest brand of Iranian cigarettes." *A Lonely Woman*, p. 54.

tone, stands as an indictment of Tehran's intellectuals. Its severity increases when one considers the significance of creativity as a means to immortality in other Farrokhzâd poems such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains." If the intellectuals are so empty of any original thought, barren of actual creative impulse or capability, then their society's future would seem to be bleak, indeed. This caricature of pseudo- intellectualism exemplifies the "civilization and culture" that constitute the speaker's stultifying lullaby in the first stanza, as does the polite conformity that succeeds it as the last in the list of advantages:

> As of tomorrow
> with complete confidence
> I'll treat myself to one velvet-covered seat for 678 sessions
> in the assembly of assembling
> and in the guaranteeing future or the assembly of gratitude and praise
> because I read *Art and Science* and *Flattery and Bowing* magazines
> from cover to cover
> and I know the "correct writing" method.

The pompous, essentially meaningless language—"in the assembly of assembling and the guaranteeing future"—suggests the benefits the speaker has reaped from the "correct writing method" she refers to. *Art and Science* taking its place beside *Flattery and Bowing* in this context re-emphasizes the empty conventionalism of the artistic and intellectual crowds that features earlier in the poem, and revisits the technological achievements of the scientists—when the nation's intellectual elite put in an appearance at an adult education class/their chests are decorated with 678 electric kabob cookers…"

After describing these benefits, the speaker turns abruptly to the living conditions of people who bear the brunt of them:

I have strode into the arena of existence
in the midst of a creative populace
who although they have no bread
have instead an open and spacious vista
presently bounded on the north by verdant Tir Square
and on the south by historic E'dâm Square
and in those overcrowded neighborhoods reaching Tupkhâneh Square.

Their open, spacious vista is grim. 'Tir' means bullet or gunshot, 'e'dâm' means execution, and 'tupkhâneh' is artillery. All these suggest the response of the Pahlavi regime[84] to nonconformity, which lends weight to the pressure of 678 as an identity.

The poem portrays Tehrâni society of the 1960s as having lost some of what made it Iranian, as the earlier images of plastic roses and poets digging in the garbage suggest, while much of its population lives in hunger and fear despite all the concern with technology and western-style goods. Tehran's response:

And in the shelter of its shining sky
and secure in its security
from morning till night
678 big plaster swans accompanied by 678 angels,
angels made of mud and clay,
are busy advertising plans for inaction and silence.

The artificial figures stand as still another diversion, another component of civilization's lullaby designed to distract one from the fact that 678 represents a human being and that inaction and silence will constitute efforts to change the situation.

Having broken the silence, the poem comes full circle with a repetition of its first line:

[84] Mohammad Rezâ Pahlavi ruled Iran from 1941 until he was deposed by the Islamic Revolution of 1978/79. As the poem indicates here, he tolerated little opposition.

I've won,
Yes I've won:
therefore long live 678, resident of Tehran,
long live 678, issued at precinct 5,
who by dint of determination and perseverance
has reached such a lofty station
that she now stands in the frame of a window 678 meters above the ground
and has the honor of being able
from that very window,
not by way of the stairs,
to hurl herself madly down
into the affectionate bosom of the motherland.

And her final will and testament is this
that, for 678 coins, that honorable master Abraham Sahba
compose an elegy in the rhyme of sing song eulogizing her life.

Hillmann explains the reference to Sahba:

> Sahba is known for his usually panegyric, extemporaneous, occasional verse, the total appeal of which lies in the cleverness of meter, rhyme, and the like. So the speaker's choice here of Sahba, always ready to compose meaningless verse on any subject, as the person to eulogize her suicide is just a final indication of how empty her existence seems in the new Pahlavi Iran.[85]

The speaker's vision of suicide eliminates any potential source of hope in the poem: the hope that one individual realizing the state of her society and speaking out about it could represent the possibility of other people reaching similar states of awareness. The speaker, the only person within the framework of the poem who sees her environment for what it is, can't endure that consciousness. As the poet, Farrokhzâd sees it too, obviously, but there is no indication here that she has any optimism that she's not expressing through the speaker. The mere notation of this society's flaws does not

[85] Hillmann, p. 54

constitute hope. There is a basic incompatibility between independent thought and this part of Tehran, and within the framework of the poem, it cannot be overcome.

This may suggest a kind of fatalism to some readers. Although some might conclude that it is necessary to guard against such a society, none of them exhibiting any of the tendencies attacked by the poem—pseudo intellectualism, uncritical westernization, materialism—need take responsibility for themselves or their environment, because they, like the speaker, have been victimized by the denial of their identities, by numbing, distracting lullabies and rattles, swans and angels. Failure has been inflicted on a population. The poem's obvious sarcasm doesn't alter the basic message of powerlessness, which is reinforced by the speaker's decision to commit suicide at the end.[86]

Powerlessness is rare in a Farrokhzâd poem. "Conquest of the Garden," the subject of the following chapter, contrasts with "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" in its portrayal of a couple taking control of their lives, independent of a society they will not conform to.

[86] For an alternative evaluation of "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land," see Mahmud Nikbakht, *Az Gomshodegi tâ Rahâ'i* [From Being Lost to Freedom] (Esfahân: Mo'assaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Mash'al, 1994), pp. 61-65. Nikbakht argues that the poem is unsuccessful, due to its prose-like style and lack of poetic structure.

V. "Conquest of the Garden:" The Triumph of the Individual

"Conquest of the Garden" represents another facet of the relationship between individual and her environment, one in which the speaker achieves emotional independence. In "It is Only the Sound That Remains," the speaker has declared her status as an individual living outside conventional boundaries, explaining/defending her choices as she attacks her critics. In "Conquest of the Garden," the speaker does much the same thing in describing her departure from conformity, and she repeatedly refers to the ill will she faces for it. However, as this chapter argues, although the poem centers on the speaker's decision to establish her individuality, like many other Farrokhzâd poems, "Conquest of the Garden" differs in its relatively uncomplicated vindication of that decision. Its mood remains undarkened by the kind of resentment and pain that figure in "It is Only the Sound That Remains," "The Bird is Mortal," and "Green Delusion," because the criticism that the speaker faces is irrelevant here, on this day.

"Conquest of the Garden" begins with the speaker's awareness of that criticism:

> That crow that flew
> over our heads,
> down through the disturbed thoughts of a vagrant cloud,
> whose call crossed the breadth of the horizon
> like a short spear,
> will carry news of us to the city. [87]

[87] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Fath-e Bâgh" [Conquest of the Garden], *Another Birth*, pp. 359-362.

The passage immediately establishes the alienation between the speaker and her lover, on the one hand, and the city on the other. Outside the city, the couple sees a crow fly rather threateningly over their heads, hurrying toward the city to carry gossip of the lovers.[88] As Hillmann notes, "this gossip-mongering is not without danger, either, since the poet compares the crow's voice to 'a short spear.'"[89] The image creates a confrontation between society and unconventional individual similar to that of "It is Only the Sound That Remains." Although the speaker understands the situation, she does not seem to be troubled by it:

> Everyone knows
> everyone knows
> that you and I saw the garden
> from that cold, grim window,
> and picked the apple
> from that playful distant branch.
>
> Everyone is afraid
> everyone is afraid, but you and I
> joined with the lamp and the water and the mirror[90]
> and we were not afraid.

Once again, the Farrokhzâd speaker places herself in direct confrontation with a

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[88] For discussions of the importance of bird images in "Conquest of the Garden," see Ardavan Davaran, "'The Conquest of the Garden': A Significant Instance of the Poetic Development of Forugh Farrokhzâd," *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzâd*, (Emeryville, CA: Albany Press, 1981), pp. 119-122; and Michael Hillmann, "Fath-e Bâgh: Farâkhâni Bar Fardiyat" [The Conquest of the Garden: A Call For Individuality], *Andisheh va Khiâl* 6 (Fall 1992): 13-22.

[89] Hillmann, "Conquest of the Garden: A Call For Individuality": 13.

[90] Milani writes that "'Light,' "water," and "mirror," symbolizing lucidity, affluence, and good fortune are used in Persian wedding ceremonies. Though the lovers of this poem are not "married" in the tradtional sense of the word, their union however is sanctified." "Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective," p. 194.

disapproving society, with the crow broadcasting like the gossips in "It is Only the Sound That Remains." But here the speaker's tone is serene as she describes the first of many contrasts between herself and her lover in nature, on one hand, and society within the city walls, on the other: they fear to step outside of convention and into joy (the garden), while the speaker and her lover boldly, unashamedly pick the apple.

The context of the action gives the apple and the garden overtones of the apple in Eden. The stanza before tells us that people are gossiping about the lovers. Then there is the repeated statement that "everyone knows" about what they have done, which by this time is obviously something significantly outside the bounds of what this society considers acceptable. Immediately after, the speaker says that "everyone is afraid," except for herself and her lover. The plucking of the apple marks the beginning of a process of increasing self awareness for the lovers in their exploration of the garden, that larger world outside the figuratively closed windows and doors of the city.

The lovers begin their journey in the city, still within the boundaries of society. Although their window there is cold and forbidding, it still serves as the opening from which they see the ideal, alternative garden. Mohammad Hoquqi emphasizes the importance of windows in Farrokhzâd's poetry as a means of her connection with the outside world, and his description of her development as a poet parallels this part of "Conquest of the Garden." After detailing obstacles she had overcome in the first three volumes of her poetry, represented by the titles *The Captive, The Wall*, and *Rebellion*, he writes of her poetic emergence through a window which had been closed, a barrier.

Once opened, "There was a flood of new and fresh words… which had had no outlet in her narrow, constrained house."[91] She burst out of confinement to write the poems of her last two volumes of poetry, *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe In the Beginning of the Cold Season*; Hillmann writes that at this stage of her life (1958 onward), she had reached a "personal resolution of conflicts…between societal expectations and her own predilections. The die was cast, and she was set on living as a poet answerable as an individual to her own personal ethics."[92]

For the rest of her life, Farrokhzâd would pay for her individualistic decisions in the loss of her son and in the criticism she faced from Iranian society. Poems such as "The Bird is Mortal" reflect her feelings of loneliness and isolation, even of despair. But in "Conquest of the Garden, the speaker and her lover have just entered a metaphorical Eden of independent thought. While she is obviously conscious of society's disapproval, she hardly concerns herself with it, other than to express a mild contempt for a way of life that precludes the joy she has discovered:

> I am not talking about the feeble joining
> of two names,
> or embracing in the old pages of a register.
> I am talking about my fortunate hair
> with the inflamed poppies of your kiss
> and the brave intimacy of our bodies
> and the gleaming of our nakedness
> like fishes' scales in the water.
> I am talking about the silvery life of a song

[91] Mohammad Hoquqi, *She'r-e Forugh Farrokhzâd az Âghâz tâ Emruz* [The Poetry of Forugh Farrokhzâd from the Beginning to Today] (Tehrân: Mo'assaseh-ye Enteshârât-e Negâh, 1993), p. 29.

[92] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 95.

that a small fountain sings at dawn.

Although specifying that she and her lover are not married (their names aren't linked in any registry of marriage),[93] she describes the significance of their sexual relationship with relish. Far from being the "lengthy whimpering wildness in animals' sexual organs," it represents something more genuine than society's approved unions, as her contemptuous references to a 'flimsy linking of two names' and 'embracing in the old pages of a register' make clear. She and her lover revel in their glowing nakedness, but unlike Adam and Eve, they continue to enjoy Eden after picking the apple.

After entering this new world, they ask the advice of its natives:

> One night in the green flowing forest,
> we asked the wild rabbits
> and in that restless cold blooded sea
> we asked the shells full of pearls
> and on that strange victorious mountain
> we asked the young eagles
> what should be done.[94]

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[93] Davaran refers to the registry as "an old book of marriage license records," p. 120.

[94] Farzaneh Milani sees this passage as support for her argument that the lovers feel threatened in the garden:

> Feelings of dislocation and vulnerability lurk behind the festive mood of this poem. From the very first line, and at the ecstatic moment when the two lovers enter their paradise, the poet describes the crow flying over their heads, the crow that eventually will spread the news of their unconventional relationship. Anxiety breaks through from the outset. Guilt and suspicion set in. The couple, it seems, remain isolated, expelled as it were. This Paradise eventually turns into an exile—a willful self-exile at best. No wonder its inhabitants have to ask the hares, the shells, and the eagles, "What is to be done?"

Milani's reading makes no distinction between being conscious of society's awareness

They have left established ways of thinking and living behind in the city, and they are exploring the freedom of many possibilities here—hence the vagueness of the question they ask. They ask inhabitants of disparate parts of the earth: rabbits of the forest, shells of the sea, and eagles on the mountain, so acquiring perspectives from widely ranging experiences in the process of redefining themselves.

They succeed in their endeavor after their consultation with the wild things, as the following stanza indicates. In spite of the fact that, as the speaker reiterates now, "Everyone knows,/Everyone knows:"

> We have found the way into the cold, silent dream
> of phoenixes
> We found truth in the garden,
> in the shy look of a nameless flower
> and eternity in an endless moment
> when two suns gazed at each other.

According to Darvaran, the first line of the stanza

> refers in part to *The Conference of the Birds* by Farid-uddin Attar, the famous Persian Sufi poet who died early in the thirteenth century. The book relates the odyssey of thirty birds in search of the phoenix, the unique and perfect bird. The birds traverse many valleys or stages in their

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and disapproval, and being affected by it. The poem alternates between descriptions of the conventions the lovers are defying and their triumphant voyage of revelation, the latter rendering the malice they sense irrelevant, if not meaningless. Consistent throughout the poem, the pattern begins with the description of the tale-bearing crow, and moves immediately to the lovers' discovery of the garden. Then comes the referral to everyone's fear, the lovers' lack of it, and the ridiculousness of 'the flimsy linking of two names/and embracing in the old pages of a register' compared to the vitality of the speaker's experiences outside that convention. In instances such as this, society's pettiness actually serves to intensify the sense of significance, even grandeur, in the claiming of their lives as individuals. Far from being an act of insecurity, their appeal to nature represents a further illustration of the lovers' rejection of society; they turn their backs on the city and value the opinions of nature in negotiating their new path.

> search, and finally reach the phoenix whose name, in Persian, is Simorgh. Attar makes use of the pun inherent in the name Simorgh to show that this unique bird is no other creature than "si" (thirty)—"morgh" (birds). The phoenix is the embodiment and equivalent of all and each one of the birds. To find the perfect bird, the birds find themselves.[95]

The couple has traveled throughout the garden in search of the significance they knew society lacked. Each time the speaker says, "I'm not talking about… (some conventional way of behaving), she describes some aspect of her relationship with her beloved that does have significance. Her inclination is validated by the lovers' discovery of the phoenix's dream, the phoenix that represents the inherent worth of each of them. They have found truth in so small an element of their chosen exile as an anonymous flower. There, the same love that stands between them and society raises them above common human experience as two suns gazing at each other, the experience taking on a sense of eternity in its magnitude. In the face of such triumph, indeed of such a conquest, society's opinion can have little significance. The speaker's next words confirm this:

> I'm not talking about fearful whispering in the dark
> I'm talking about daytime and open windows
> and fresh air
> and a stove that useless things burn in
> and a land fertile with another planting
> and birth and evolution and pride.
> I'm talking about our loving hands
> that have built a bridge across nights
> from the message of fragrance and light and breeze.

The first two lines of this passage alone argue against the lovers feeling guilt, anxiety, or suspicion. Everyone knows everything that the lovers are doing, because they aren't

[95] Darvaran, pp. 120-121.

physically in a separate place outside the city. The garden is metaphorical, a place of freedom that represents the departure of the couple from society's constraints in their decision to live as individualities. It is an instance of the individual taking her world with her and interacting with the outside from within that world wherever she is, as the poet described being able to do in the interview quoted earlier (p. 53). Since the lovers could not be conducting their relationship more openly, there is no suspicion on anyone's part; people understand clearly what is happening, and the lovers know they do. As the poem progresses, the speaker becomes more confident in her choice to live as an individual, rather than less, until at this point she describes her relationship with pride, as a structure of love and accomplishment and progress. The stove is a physical manifestation of their individualistic worldview, burning whatever is irrelevant. Replacing the irrelevant is the land fertile with what they have chosen. As if seeking to broadcast the joy of this state of being and living, she suddenly shifts to second person, inviting her lover to call to her from a most open place, a meadow:

> Come to the meadow,
> to the big meadow,
> and call me from behind the breaths of the acacia
> just as the deer calls its mate.

Hillmann notes here that

> When the poet says "Come to the meadow," the reader supposes…that she is addressing him or her, and not just the lover—and so she is. We as individual readers are invited to choose a life like the life of the speaker: a beautiful, simple life, genuine and without concern about others, like the life of a deer and its mate in its complete harmony with nature.[96]

[96] Hillmann, "Conquest of the Garden: A Call For Individuality": 19-20.

The passage rings with joy and assurance in its call to an alternate way of life.

The last stanza negates with finality the suggestion that society's opinions have any relevance:

> The curtains are overflowing with
> hidden malice
> and from the heights of their white tower
> innocent doves
> look to the ground.

These four lines recapitulate the primary themes of the entire poem: the innocent take their place as part of nature, above the malice contained behind the window from which people like the lovers have escaped. The lovers are as much beyond society's disapproval as the doves are, even though they're conscious of it. Ardavan Davaran points out in his discussion of the stanza's first line:

> [It] relates an awareness of the potential danger of those "tattle-talers" who watch and judge from behind their curtains, setting an ambush, as it were. The line also relates the attitude of the lovers towards these upholders of the social taboos. Their dismissal is done subtly and effectively. What gloom should be theirs in those dark rooms separated with curtains from the vast, open natural world…[97]

An important distinction in the analysis of Farrokhzâd's social poems is that, although these poems encompass more of the outside world than her earlier works did, most of them are still concerned with society in terms of the individual, as opposed to society as a whole, in terms of doctrine. "Conquest of the Garden" illustrates the discovery of individuality in the context of a love relationship, as a direct result of a break with the suffocating rooms and conventions of society.

[97] Davaran, p. 122.

Farrokhzâd's speakers are usually not so fortunate in their quest for individuality. Chapter six deals with the potential cost of self awareness—one aspect of that endeavor—in its analysis of "Green Delusion."

VI. “Green Delusion”: The Cost of Self-Awareness

Farrokhzâd poems often reflect the pain that she encountered in her efforts to live as an individual in Iranian society. “Green Delusion” deals with such pain, but it is unusual for a Farrokhzâd poem, in that it is unrelieved by the compensation of creative satisfaction, or the fulfillment of a love relationship. This chapter on “Green Delusion” examines the significance of the speaker’s determination to pursue self awareness, a truth about her life decisions, even when she realizes that the knowledge will intensify her unhappiness.

Isolation and sadness characterize Farrokhzâd speakers at every stage of her writing career. In her early poems, she writes of longing for a beloved in “Hasrat” [Longing], her feelings of alienation from society in “Fled,” and her grief at losing contact with her son after her divorce in “A Poem for You” and “Bâz Gasht” [Return]. She agonizes frequently about choices she has made and is considering making, as in “The Abandoned House.” A more confident, mature tone marks her last two volumes, often lonely and sad, but with the ambivalence of her earlier work largely absent. Her poetic voice is stronger, whether in joy ("Conquest of the Garden"), in anger (“The Wind-up Doll” and “It is Only the Sound That Remains”), or in concern (“I Feel Sorry for the Garden”). Even in poems such as “The Bird is Mortal” and “Ân Ruzhâ” [Those Days], where she writes of unhappiness and nostalgia for simpler days, there is little or

no regret in the tone; an autobiographical reading yields scant evidence that the poet regrets the life choices that have undoubtedly contributed to her loneliness. In "Another Birth," the speaker refers to her isolation and sadness, but she emphasizes the connection between individuality, creativity and immortality that we see in "It is Only the Sound That Remains."

In its insistence on individual self-awareness, on every human being's responsibility to establish his or her individuality in the context of society, much of Farrokhzâd's later work insists on risking the pain that the poet speaks of so frequently. "Vahm-e Sabz" [Green Delusion] documents a particular aspect of the process of self-realization, as do many Farrokhzâd poems such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains," "Conquest of the Garden," and "Another Birth." But the poem departs from several characteristics that Farrokhzâd's other work exhibits. The speaker considers nature, even the rebirth of spring, an antagonist, she flinches away from self-awareness, and she finally doubts that any of the sacrifices that contribute to the pain she describes have been meaningful, since creativity does not lead to a form of immortality or even present satisfaction. The fact that she does face what she fears, in spite of the intense pain that it gives her, gives weight to Farrokhzâd's consistent emphasis on the process of self-knowledge; "Green Delusion" depicts both the process and its cost.

The first stanza establishes the tone of agonized doubt immediately:

I cried in the mirror all day.
Spring had entrusted my window
to the trees' green delusion.
My body would not fit in the cocoon of my loneliness

and the smell of my paper crown
had polluted
the air of that sunless realm. [98]

The speaker seems imprisoned in her dark cocoon, able to see the springtime outside, able to see the springtime outside, but deriving no comfort in the vitality, the new life that the season signifies. Rather than reveling in nature or seeking refuge there, as Farrokhzâd speakers in poems such as "It is Only the Sound That Remains" and "Conquest of the Garden" often do, this speaker sees nature as an agent of her despair. Even more significantly conflicted is the negative reference to the paper crown, which suggests that the speaker's recognition as a poet is a mockery of triumph, only exacerbating her depression on this occasion.

The second stanza enlarges on the immediate causes of the speaker's despair:

I couldn't anymore, I couldn't.
The sound of the street, the sound of birds,
the sound of tennis balls getting lost,
the fleeing clamor of children,
the dance of balloons
climbing on the ends of string stems
like soap bubbles,
and the wind, the wind,
as if breathing in the depths
of the deepest dark moments of lovemaking,
all were pressing
against the walls of the silent fortress of my confidence,
and through the old cracks, were calling my heart by name.

The first line stirs a sense of tension about what it is that the speaker can't continue doing any longer, while the last three lines make clear that she is fighting an as yet

[98] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Vahm-e Sabz" [Green Delusion], *Another Birth*, pp. 354-358.

unspecified battle. The children's street games obviously contrast with her state of adult isolation, while the birds and the soaring balloons may remind her of her own sense of confinement. But desperate resistance, rather than wistfulness or nostalgia, marks her tone here, with all these outside elements combining with the wind to attack her confidence via her heart. The question of why she is resisting springtime, the sound of children, and a wind reminiscent of love increases in complexity and intensity in the third stanza:

> All day my gaze
> was fixed on my life's eyes,
> on those two anxious, fearful eyes
> which fled from my steady gaze
> and sought refuge in the safe seclusion of their lids
> like liars.

In addition to hiding from attractive, aggressive aspects of the outside world, the speaker is trying to hide from something she may see in her own eyes—an uncharacteristic tendency in a Farrokhzâd poem. She knows she is doing it, scorning it with her description of the eyes as liars.

With the foundation of the speaker's quandary established in this first section, the focus shifts suddenly in the next stanza, in which a series of questions marks the beginning of the poem's middle section. The speaker is musing to herself, but also seems to appeal to us in her turn away from the mirror, to ask us to join her in contemplating the value of choosing one way over another when all roads end in death:

> Which peak, which summit?
> Don't all these winding roads
> meet and end

in that cold, sucking mouth?

The consistent tone of appeal characterizes the next four stanzas, as well. It establishes a relationship with readers that invites an intensified participation in the poem and the painful mental journey it depicts.

Farrokhzâd poems frequently demonstrate a sharp awareness of human mortality,[99] but those same poems often depict poetry, creativity in general, as a kind of counter to that mortality. Those who create do not die in every sense of the word. But here, immediately after describing her inability to face something in her own eyes, after describing her resistance to something and her powerlessness to continue doing something, she questions this relationship. Regardless of what path one takes, regardless of what one may contribute, everything is swallowed by that cold, sucking mouth of death. Poetry doesn't enrich the speaker's life even temporarily, much less earn her immortality:

> O, simple words of deception,
> O, denial of bodies and desires,
> what did you give me?
> If I put a flower in my own hair,
> would it not be more enchanting
> than this deceit, this paper crown
> gone rank on my head?

The poignancy of this passage intensifies when one considers a poem from *The Captive* that Farrokhzâd wrote in 1955, "The Abandoned House":

> I know now that life's happiness

[99] "The Bird is Mortal,"It is Only the Sound That Remains," and "Another Birth" are three among many.

has flown from that remote house.
I know now that a child weeps,
mourning his distant mother.

But I, heart weary and distressed,
set out on the road of hope.
Poetry is my companion, poetry is my lover.
I go to find it.[100]

The poem depicts what the speaker has left behind in order to pursue her life, her identity, as a poet. She's suffering, but she has hope and a goal. She is no longer the prisoner of the collection's title. In "Green Delusion," first published seven years after "The Abandoned House," we see a speaker imprisoned once more, with no mention of a possible escape. She has sacrificed a conventional life as wife and mother to become a poet, has found herself isolated from much of society as an additional consequence. Now she finds that poetry has left her unfulfilled, that recognition of her work—her paper crown—is rotting on her head, intensifying her pain rather than relieving it.

Comparing the role of poetry and creativity in poems from different stages of Farrokhzâd's career can intensify a reader's experience of "Green Delusion," but it isn't necessary to an appreciation of the latter poem. After noting that all roads end in the same place, the speaker of "Green Delusion" describes a journey of her own that seems a continuation of the one we see a woman begin in "The Abandoned House":

How the spirit of the wilderness took me
and the moon's magic distanced me from the flock's faith!
How my heart's lack grew large,
and no half completed this half!

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[100] Farrokhzâd, "Khâneh-ye Matruk" [The Abandoned House], *The Captive,* p. 93.

How I stood and saw
the support of the earth
empty beneath my feet
and the warmth of my mate's body
not fulfilling the vain anticipation of mine!

The stanza's series of exclamations lends the passage a sense of spontaneity that strengthens the impression of the speaker addressing her audience directly. In the first two lines of the stanza, she seems to explain her early attraction to a life dedicated to poetry. Instead of living like a sheep, following other sheep and doing as they did, she followed the 'moon's magic' that set her apart from the flock—and later resulted in the loneliness she now experiences.

Even within the framework of the poem, this, in conjunction with the image of a paper crown and the fact that whoever is addressing us is doing so via a poem, indicates that 'moon's magic' has to do with inspiration, the drive to create poetry. Something about the way this person wrote entailed a departure from a group mentality, and the loss of that group's faith; the passage clearly describes the relationship between her writing and the process of developing individuality, along with that process's questioning of models of thought and behavior. The rest of the stanza illustrates the price the speaker has paid for her departure from convention, a price compounded by her present uncertainty about whether her choice was more meaningful than any other, perhaps less painful, way she could have taken.

On this day, when the speaker takes no comfort from poetry or her success writing it, she reaches out in longing to elements of the traditional domestic life that she

has left behind:

> Which peak, which summit?
> Give me refuge, o apprehensive lights,
> o bright houses of doubt,
> washed clothes fluttering in the embrace of fragrant smoke
> on your sunny roofs.

The question repeated here reminds us of the speaker's doubt about her past decisions and the relationship between creativity and mortality. It heightens the tension, the sense that she is running from something she can't face, which we see first in her inability to face herself in the mirror. The fear echoing through the poem and setting it apart from most of Farrokhzâd's other work, surfaces again when the speaker appeals to traditional domestic life for refuge. Of course, the tone is wistful, and the speaker misses what she has left. But the soon to be repeated request for refuge makes clear that she's seeking protection from something besides sadness:

> Give me refuge, o simple, whole women,
> whose delicate fingertips trace
> the joyous movement of a fetus
> beneath the skin,
> air always mingling with the smell of fresh milk
> in your open blouses.

Milani points out that "If in "Green Delusion" Forugh considers herself half an entity: "In my half-grown heart the void grew/and no other half joined to this half," she views married women as "whole." 'Give me sanctuary, o you simple whole women.'"[101] The passage rings with yearning, the love of new life and the nurturing of it. Here, out of her

[101] Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, p.253n.

reach, is ongoing life and a form of immortality. In "It is Only the Sound That Remains," we see the association between creativity, breastfeeding, and immortality when the speaker describes herself nursing a bunch of unripe wheat. There, a speaker feels herself a part of growth, nurturing, and continued life. They are as unreachable from this speaker's moldering prison as the new life of spring that tortures her from outside the window.

The speaker appeals next to everyday, perhaps less painful parts of the 'bright houses' she has already reached out to, beginning with the third repetition of both her urgent question and her request:

> Which peak, which summit?
> Give me refuge, o hearths full of fire,
> o good luck horseshoes,
> O, song of copper pots in the sooty work of a kitchen,
> O, sad hum of the sewing machine,
> O, day and night struggle of carpets and brooms

In the speaker's current frame of mind, even this aspect of conventional life holds its appeal. The warmth and security of the hearth, the hope of a horseshoe, render even the noise of cooking in a sooty kitchen a song. Although the sewing machine's hum is sad in its monotony and the drudgery of sweeping is hardly minimized, the speaker still wishes, albeit probably hopelessly, for the security of a safe place within that dependable world. That is not to say that she wishes she could go back to the world she has left. If she wanted that, she probably wouldn't have referred to conventional people as a flock. But she does regret some aspects of that life, looking into these domestic scenes firmly ensconced on the outside as she is.

The next facet of domestic life that she turns to is less mundane:

> Give me shelter, o greedy loves all,
> whose painful thirst for eternity
> adorns your bed of possession
> with magical water
> and drops of fresh blood.

In the conventional setting of this section of the poem, love can be associated with permanence in at least two ways when a couple marries: the marriage gives society's blessing to the permanency of love between a man and a woman, and the couple's union may result in children who will embody their love and represent continued life. The fact that 'your' in 'your bed of possession' (in the Persian and in my translation) refers to 'greedy loves' suggests that the love may be that of a man, whose nuptial scene of conquest is complete with semen[102] and the blood of his virginal bride.[103]

The love the speaker addresses here seems a strange potential source of sanctuary.

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[102] Mohammad 'Abdali, Âsemân Rowshan-e She'r [The Clear Sky of Poetry] (Tehrân: Enteshârât-e Fekr-e Ruz, 1998), p. 21.

[103] In a footnote to their translation of "Green Delusion" in *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 131-132, Hasan Javadi and Susan Sallée write:

> In former times of Iranian culture, men would take more than one wife. When a man took a second wife, it was important to the first wife that she safeguard her hold upon the man's affections, and to do so she would employ various superstitious devices. One such device was to sprinkle specially prepared water over the nuptial bed of the new bride, a custom to which Forugh refers in this line.

Such an interpretation leaves the blood unexplained. If 'greedy loves' refers to the first wife, she would have to be responsible for the blood. Karim Emami, in an e-mail to the author dated February 2, 2005, suggests that the blood, taken from something like a chicken, would also be part of the rite. In this reading, 'baqâ' would indicate survival rather than eternity or immortality.

Coming after images of domestic contentment, the descriptions of greedy (unsatisfied, perhaps insatiable) love, pain associated with the awareness of death, and a bloody bed appear particularly dark. This scene is, in fact, much closer to the speaker's own situation than any of the other homely scenarios she has envisioned. The longing for immortality, even the drops of blood with their connotations of sacrifice, echo the fear of death and the suffering that pervade the poem.

These appeals for refuge began soon after the speaker described her own inability to face something that she saw in the mirror. She turned away from herself to reflect on the futility of choices in the face of mortality, to contemplate her own series of choices, and then began her search for an escape from the knowledge in her mirror in another world, a conventional, comfortable world of routine. The last unsettled glimpse of a not so comfortable scene bearing some resemblance to her own life sees her drifting back to the prospect she tried to escape before, beginning the third and final section of the poem:

> All day, all day
> forsaken, forsaken like a corpse on the water,
> I moved toward the most terrifying rock,
> toward the deepest cave of the sea,
> and the most carnivorous fish
> and the delicate vertebrae of my back
> spasmed at the sense of death.

The first line of the stanza, "tamâm-e ruz, tamâm-e ruz" [all day, all day] echoes the Persian first line of the poem ("tamâm ruz dar âyineh geryeh mikardam" [I cried in the mirror all day]), and the speaker is coming full circle. The poem has been full of movement to this point, with frequent changes in focus as she resists the forces pressing

against the walls of the "silent fortress" of her confidence. But in returning to the frame of the poem's beginning, she is losing her struggle. The movement she describes seems without volition, she corpse-like. As she drifts toward the inevitable rock, the deepest cave of her mind, it seems evident even before the last lines of the stanza that her flight is over. She must confront that cold, sucking mouth now, but the final blow is yet to come:

> I couldn't anymore, I couldn't
> The sound of my footsteps rose from the denial of the road
> my despair had grown larger than the endurance of my soul,
> and that spring, that green delusion
> passing the window, said to my heart,
> "Look
> you never advanced;
> you descended."

This time when she declares her inability to continue, we realize the nature of the struggle she has referred to several times. Although she has contemplated mortality, the inevitability of one end to any story, and has contemplated her own life decisions, she has resisted drawing conclusions about her life based on that end. The wind is blowing against the walls of her fortress, but hasn't penetrated them yet. There have been alternatives to absolute death in other Farrokhzâd poems, and the paths this speaker has chosen would seem to lead to a creative immortality. But she can't sense that here; the paper crown rots on her head, and she feels the presence of annihilation close by throughout the poem. Now, even as she denies the road to death that she considered earlier, she hears her own footsteps on it, and she falters. Her endurance is finally exhausted, the walls of her fortress breached, and in that instant, life incarnate and

deceptive, the misconception that one can ever begin anew, delivers the *coup de grace*: her sacrifice of a conventional place in society, with all the security and homeliness and vanished support of a mate that she longs for here, has been meaningless, as has been any achievement as a poet. She has agonized and stagnated in her cocoon for nothing.

Even in its unusual dreariness, "Green Delusion" rests easily in the context of other Farrokhzâd poems. The first line of the poem makes clear that this is written on a particular occasion, this day. Without minimizing the pain evident in "Green Delusion," it's entirely reasonable that an individual should feel unhappy about her life on one day and much different about it on another. Farrokhzâd's poems do tend to reflect a spectrum of moods without contradicting each other. In addition, the speaker's ability to finally stand and endure the last stanza's epiphany brings a bleak sense of accomplishment to the poem that denies annihilation and adds conviction to the commitment to self reflection and consciousness that runs through Farrokhzâd's later work.

"My Lover," the subject of Chapter 7, combines much of the joy of living according to one's own precepts that we see in "Conquest of the Garden" with the awareness of risk that such a practice involves—the risk of repercussions such as those experienced by the speaker of "Green Delusion."

VII. "My Lover:" The Complexity of Practical Individuality

The development of individuality involves the willingness to examine and reject standards of behavior and being, making decisions about self-conceptions and interactions with the external world based on individual considerations. But the automatic dismissal of a social expectation or ideal, based on the fact that it is such, becomes another type of conformity. This chapter examines practical rather than theoretical individuality, as it is represented by the individualistic mixture of traditional ideals and the rejection of them in Farrokhzâd's "Ma'shuq-e Man" [My Lover]. It concludes with a discussion of the threat to such individuality portrayed in the final stanza.

Introducing one of the premises of his historical analysis of human individuality, Karl Weintraub emphasizes the contrast between "'model' conceptions of personality and individuality," and notes that

> this heuristic device posits, on one hand, the adherence of men to great personality ideals in which their culture tends to embody its values and objectives—and on the other hand, a commitment to a self for which there is no model…All such ideals share certain formal characteristics. They prescribe for the individual certain substantive personality traits, certain values, virtues, and attitudes. They embody specific life-styles into which to fit the self. They offer man a script for his life, and only in the unprescribed interstitial spaces is there room for idiosyncrasy.[104]

Farrokhzâd's development as a poet demonstrates a consistent movement away

[104] Weintraub, p. xv.

from traditional models in both form and content. She begins writing in regular rhyme and meter, using classical forms, and moves toward a more irregular form which leaves rhyme and traditionally consistent meter behind.[105] More significantly, her speakers reflect an ever-expanding consciousness of self as individual, with perspectives on their environments broadening and increasing in sophistication. Where many of her early poems such as "Fled" incorporate a simple, model of a rebellious relationship with society (essentially, "They gossip about me because I don't care about the rules"), her later work features speakers more complex in conception of self, environment, and the relationship between them.

While the lack of dependence on models of behavior and personality marks the pursuit of individuality, it's unlikely that the most fervent individualist could purge traditional elements from her life decisions or from her interaction with the world. An attempt to do so, far from making her more an individuality, would entail a sort of reverse conformation to models by allowing them to determine her actions and conception of self. "My Lover" brings the establishment of individuality out of the theoretical world of tradition and individuality; it demonstrates that there is no contradiction between adherence to some aspects of convention on one hand and individuality on the other, with a speaker who exuberantly defies tradition in describing quite traditional elements of her relationship with a heroic beloved who really likes a clothesline. The sudden change of focus in the last stanza emphasizes that individuality carries risks in this environment,

[105] Three exceptions to this in her last two volumes are "'Âsheqâneh" [Lovingly], "Ghazal" [Ghazal], and "Mordâb" [Swamp].

just as it does in "It is Only the Sound That Remains," and "Green Delusion."

Farzaneh Milani has noted the striking reversal of gender roles in the poem. As she states in her discussion of "My Lover" that I quoted in the introduction, the speaker in classical Persian poetry is male.[106] A woman publicly taking the initiative and describing a beloved, especially with a frank current of physical desire as in the poem's beginning, certainly stands as a radical departure from standards of behavior.

The very section of the poem where the speaker is flouting convention most thoroughly happens to be the section where the beloved appears at his most (which is certainly not total) traditional. The poem begins:

> My lover,
> with that naked shameless body,
> stands on mighty feet
> like death.
> Slanting, restless lines
> trace his rebellious limbs
> in their constant patterns.
>
> My lover
> seems to have come from forgotten generations
> as if in the depths of his eyes
> a Tartar is always
> lying in ambush for a horseman,
> as if in the vital flash of his teeth,
> a barbarian
> is held rapt by the warm blood of prey.[107]

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[106] Milani, *Veils and Words*, pp. 140-141, quoted in the introduction.

[107] Farrokhzâd, "Ma'shuq-e Man" [My Lover], *Another Birth*, pp. 325- 328. My translation owes much to that of Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak in *Remembering the Flight: Twenty Poems by Forugh Farrokhzâd* (Port Coquitlam, B.C.: Nik Publishers, 1997), pp. 37-41, and to that of Michael Hillmann from his academic packet entitled *The Sound That Remains: Forty Persian Poems by Forugh Farrokhzad,* p. 31.

The speaker exults in her lover's "naked, shameless body," admires his power and aggressiveness, and seems to be establishing him as a hero of the Iranian epic (e.g. Ferdowsi's *Shahnâmeh*) model even as she demolishes the model of male-female roles. Even at this point there are a few departures from the completely traditional role of hero, with lines tracing rebellious limbs. (The classical Persian hero rarely violates the patriarchal order in which the king reigns supreme, and he usually suffers for it if he does.) But for the most part, the imagery reinforces the impression of an all-conquering warrior: the beloved's mighty feet call to mind those of Rostam, which shook the earth when he walked; his stance is like that of death, irresistible; he comes from the past, as ancient heroes do, and he's warlike, bloodthirsty.

In the next section of the poem, the speaker and the beloved become more complex:

> My lover,
> like nature, has a blunt, inevitable meaning.
> In conquering me,
> he confirms
> the forthright law of power.
>
> He is savagely free,
> like a healthy instinct
> deep in an uninhabited island.

Here, the speaker who has been reversing sexual roles presents her lover's conquest of her as evidence of his masculine prowess, and she seems to savor it no less than any other manifestation of his strength. While she moves toward tradition, though, we begin to see indications that he is far from bound by it.

His dominance over the speaker maintains some of the tradition that marks him so strongly earlier in the poem, but the introduction of his association with the wilder aspects of nature breaks away from that model. In this sense, "My Lover" is consistent with the confrontation that we see in "It is Only the Sound That Remains" and "Conquest of the Garden": the development of individuality associated with principles of nature on one hand, and conformity associated with the city on the other.

The beloved's conquest of the speaker conforms to the law of power within nature, not society. The stanza begins by stating that his essence is like that of nature, and the first line of the next stanza elaborates: "He is savagely free/like a healthy instinct/deep in an uninhabited island." Elements of each of these lines contribute to the sense of pulling back from society and connection to nature: savagely free, the instinct, and the island with no people.

Immediately after, the speaker makes clear that although he seems nearly superhuman at the poem's opening, he is not a traditional epic hero: "He cleans the dust of the street/from his shoes/with shreds of Majnun's tent." The air of contempt in the action draws the distinction plainly; there is no direct challenge, but Majnuns[108] are simply irrelevant. In an interview with Iraj Gorgin in 1964, Farrokhzâd stated, "Our world has nothing to do with the world of Hâfez and Sa'di…We talk about love, about the character of Majnun, who was always, well, the symbol of constancy and

[108] Majnun is the hero of the twelfth century Iranian poet Nezami's *Layli and Majnun*. Layli's father has denied Majnun as a suitor because his love for her appears intense to the point of madness. Majnun lives in the desert for years, pining for Layli.

perseverance in love. From my perspective, I'm living a different kind of life, and he's a completely ridiculous character to me."[109]

The beloved bridges this gap between the classical world of Nezami and the present world. Neither tradition bound nor completely idiosyncratic, he belongs to the past and to the present:

> My lover,
> like a god in a Nepalese temple,
> seems to be a stranger
> to the beginnings of his existence.
> He
> is a man of centuries past,
> a reminder of beauty's authenticity.
>
> In his own environment,
> he constantly awakens
> innocent memories,
> like the smell of a child.
> Like a glad folk song,
> he is naked and rough.

He is "a man of centuries past," but the same stanza says that he's "a stranger to the beginnings of his existence." A god in a Nepalese temple has a timeless quality, ancient, yet of contemporary importance to worshippers and, as described here, seemingly unaware of his history. For the beloved, although the connection with the past is there, it isn't part of his immediate consciousness. That lack of self-consciousness suggests a lack of awareness of his own heroic qualities that feature in the poem's beginning, qualities that reflect his relationship to the past. It allows him to maintain the

[109] Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Interview With Iraj Gorgin," *Forugh Farrokhzâd: Javdâneh Zistan, dar Owj Mândan* [Forugh Farrokhzâd: Forever Living, Remaining at the Pinnacle], edited by Behruz Jalâli (Tehrân: Enteshârât-e Morvârid, 1375), p. 169.

individualistic balance between the heroic and the everyday that characterizes him throughout the poem, and contributes to the "beauty's authenticity" about him that ends the sixth stanza.

The seventh stanza elaborates on the beloved's lack of artifice that constitutes such an integral part of his individuality, as well as the influence of that quality on people in his environment. It is his simplicity that "constantly awakens innocent memories, like the smell of a child" in people around him, and the stanza's final description of him as "a glad folk song…naked and rough" establishes him as an unpolished man of the people, echoing both the sense of the genuine that we saw in "beauty's authenticity" and the beloved's association with nature. Like a folk song, too, he is part of the past that exists naturally today.

The beloved's relationship with the present follows easily:

> He honestly loves
> the atoms of life,
> the atoms of dust,
> human sorrows,
> utter sorrows.

The stanza suggests the depth of his attachment to his environment, the acuteness of his consciousness of its aspects both physical (atoms of life and dust) and emotional (human sorrows). His awareness of those sorrows reflects Farrokhzâd's insistence that the development of self doesn't take place in isolation of the external world, the stance that forms such an integral part of "I Feel Sorry for the Garden." As with "Conquest of the Garden," the interview with Tâhbâz and Sâ'edi that I quoted earlier is apropos here,

particularly where Farrokhzâd said, "I do not condone taking refuge in a room with the doors shut and looking inward under those circumstances. … When a person finds her own world among people and in the depths of life, then she can always have it with her and stay in touch with the outside world from within it."[110] In "My Lover," the beloved's positive relationship with the world around him also reduces the tension between the poem's earlier depiction of him as wild, a part of nature as opposed to society, and the current portrayal of him as enjoying many facets of civilization:

> He honestly loves
> a village garden path,
> a tree,
> a dish of ice cream,
> a clothesline.

The beloved's fondness for such mundane things supports Mohammad Mokhtâri's assertion that "he, like her [the speaker], is common. He is someone who puts uniqueness together in a manner of his own. Rather than that idol for elites to worship, he is like everyone's beloved, in a normal life…"[111] Homely pleasures of the senses appeal to him: the green, growing things of a garden path, perhaps the shade of a tree, the taste of ice cream. Having established the beloved as an individuality comprised of contradictions—heroic and fond of ice cream, savage and honestly in love with a village garden path, a figure of the past who is conscious of his present world down to the atoms of dust—the poem ends with a stanza that emphasizes him and the speaker as essentially alone:

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[110] See more extensive quote on page 53.
[111] Mokhtâri, p. 611.

My lover
is a simple person,
a simple person whom I,
in this strange ominous land,
have hidden in the thicket of my breasts
like the last oracle of a wondrous religion.

The passage represents an abrupt shift in tone from the comfortable images of the two previous stanzas, with the final lines of the poem accomplishing three things. First, they remind us sharply of both characters' refusal to adhere to behavioral models. The stanza begins where the last one left off, characterizing the beloved as a simple man, but the speaker reappears as a central figure and assumes a protective role in a suddenly hostile environment. The role reversal of a woman sheltering her male lover recalls the individual mixture of characteristics that make up the speaker's persona, while the man who stands "on mighty feet like death" at the poem's beginning taking refuge in her strength here does the same for him.

Second, the lines place the lovers, re-emphasized as strongly individual, in a threatening "strange ominous land." Although 'ajâyeb,' which I have translated as 'strange,' denotes strange in the sense of wondrous, 'showm' [ominous] gives the word a negative sense. The poem's conclusion on this note acknowledges the significance of the model breaching that both have done. In spite of the positive depictions of some aspects of society—the village garden path, for example—the couple seems alienated from the rest of humanity, much as the defiant couple of "Conquest of the Garden" is. In the latter poem, society disapproved of the lovers, but was powerless to affect them; here, it poses a significant threat.

Third, the passage clarifies the nature of the conflict between the lovers and their environment with the description of the beloved as "the last oracle of a wondrous religion" that the speaker hides and protects. Religions govern the choices their adherents make, the priorities they set. The beloved, in what he is and what he has chosen, would seem to represent a religion involving disregard, perhaps unawareness of, convention—especially where convention disagrees with his own inclinations. The speaker's similar bent is evident both in her disregard for cultural expectations and in this joyful celebration of her rebellious lover. The use of the word 'mazhab' [religion] is significant because it emphasizes the couple's level of commitment to their set of priorities, and the speaker's description of the beloved as like the *last* oracle adds to the sense of menace that they're facing as a result. Taken together, it becomes clear that living outside social models has social repercussions.

The easy movement in "My Lover" between models of tradition and individual modes of expression and being indicates a lack of concern with any apparent inconsistency in reflecting classical ideals in one line, and abandoning them in the next. Making decisions according to individual self-conception rather than paradigms of either tradition or rebellion stands at the heart of this poem, with the speaker and her beloved established as adherents of their own practical individuality even in a disapproving "ominous land."

Chapter 8 will discuss this and other experiences of individuality in its analysis of "Another Birth" as a summary of Farrokhzâd's worldview.

VIII. "Another Birth:" The Manifesto of an Individuality

In "Another Birth" the speaker's reflects on the nature of life, death, creativity, and immortality. She evaluates herself and her place in the world, and ponders love's relevance to all the above. Throughout, the importance of the self-aware individual remains fundamental. In this chapter's analysis of the poem, I argue that "Another Birth" forms a sort of overview of the poet's ideas on the potential of individuality.

The focus in "Another Birth" shifts frequently, but representations of love begin, end, and weave through the poem, uniting it. The speaker discusses other life concerns in terms of how love affects them. The poem's first stanza establishes the relationship between the individual, love, immortality, and creativity in six lines:

> My whole being is a dark chant
> that will carry you
> perpetuating you
> to the dawn of eternal growths and blossomings.
> In this chant I sighed you, sighed
> in this chant
> I grafted you to the tree,
> to the water, to the fire.[112]

Clearly, the passage centers on the immortal, the imperishable. 'Âyeh' refers to a verse from the Qur'ân; according to Karim Emami, he translated it as 'chant' because Farrokhzâd had told him that she had "some everlasting thing in mind, like the

[112] Farrokhzâd, "Another Birth," *Another Birth*, pp. 391-395. Translation by Karim Emami with Forugh Farrokhzâd, "Az Khâk beh Khâk, az Jân beh Jahân" [From Earth to Earth, from Life to the World], *Âarash*, no. 13 (Esfand 1967): 124-126.

Word of God" when she used 'âyeh.'[113] 'Chant' conveys that sense of religious permanence in English better than 'verse.' The fact that the verse, her being, is a dark one suggests pain, foreshadowing the sadness of later stanzas. The sense of melancholy continues with the speaker's description of perpetuating the beloved via this chant that she sighs, that she is sighing as we read: the poem itself. As we read, we participate in the immortalization of the beloved, since he will survive as long as the poem does. Through her art, her creativity, which is everything she is ("hameh-ye hasti-ye man" —my whole being), she unites him with the elements of nature that will exist as long as the earth does.

In the poem's next section, the speaker turns to the outside world, musing about the meaning of life in what seems at first to be a shift of focus:

> Life is perhaps
> a long street through which a woman holding a basket
> passes every day.
>
> Life is perhaps
> a rope with which a man hangs himself from a branch.
> Life is perhaps a child returning home from school.
> Life is perhaps lighting up a cigarette
> in the narcotic repose between two lovemakings
> or the absent gaze of a passerby
> who takes off his hat to another passerby
> with a meaningless smile and a good morning.

Hasan Javadi writes of this section that

> Reflections on the human situation and questions about the meaning of life are taken up in stanzas 2 through 6, where Forugh proposes various definitions of life—none particularly satisfying—and where she examines life's transience and inevitable movement toward decay…Pondering the question of life, Forugh…asks herself if it is the routine walk of a woman

[113] Emami, p. 121.

> on a long street, or a child returning from school, or an absent-minded passer-by who tips his hat absent-mindedly to another passer-by. Forugh in this case sees life to be merely a transient period marking a larger cycle, and indeed each of these three images illustrates someone in motion, someone in transit from one place to another, rather than someone stationary or arrived.[114]

All these images do describe a sort of transition. For that matter, the man hanging himself would also seem to be in a state of transition between one state and another. But the first stanza of the poem, with its depiction of passionate attachment to a beloved and immersion in poetry, removes the possibility of life being 'merely' anything to the speaker. M.R. Ghanoonparvar seems closer to the mark when he writes:

> Farrokhzad does not give the reader an abstract, philosophical definition of life. Life consists of ordinary, everyday occurrences: a woman passing through the street with her basket, a child returning home from school, even a person hanging himself with a rope…Life…is itself a process of repetition. Life can also be a collection of moments, regardless of their meaningfulness to those involved in them…[115]

The last four lines of the section bring us back to the poem's beginning, to the relationship between love, poetry, immortality, and nature:

> Life is perhaps that enclosed moment
> when my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes
> and it is in the feeling
> which I will put into the Moon's perception
> and the Night's impression.

The speaker continues to say 'perhaps,' but she is definite about the significance of the moment she describes, and the change in intensity sets this representation of life

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[114] Hasan Javadi, "Notes on 'Another Birth,'" *Another Birth: Selected Poems of Forugh Farrokhzad*, pp. 126-127.

[115] M.R. Ghanoonparvar, "Another Reading of 'Another Birth,'" *Forugh Farrokhzad: A Quarter-Century Later*, p. 81.

apart from the others. As Hillmann characterizes the section, "the images of everyday happenings…may collectively define life's essence,"[116] so there isn't a contradiction between the last scenario and the ones preceding it. But it does end the list of images of the transient with an image of something lasting. Ending the section as it does, immediately after the description of a rote, meaningless exchange between strangers, it stands out as being an aspect of life worthy of particular attention.

After considering various perspectives on the world, the speaker returns to that of the first stanza, essentially restating it. Emami writes that during their collaboration, he and Farrokhzâd discussed her reference to "the moon's perception" and "the night's impression." The poet told him that "with man's brief life on earth…it is what the moon sees of us that counts and not vice-versa."[117] (The Persian "edrâk-e mâh" can be read as "the moon's perception" or "the perception of the moon.") Again, she is reaching for the image of the eternal. But the passage remains ambiguous, leading Ghanoonparvar to write:

> Unfortunately, Farrokhzad's explanation of these terms does not reveal a clear, concrete image or idea which sustains the logical progression of the poem. If we are to understand life as the "closed moment that my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes," in other words, the expression of a moment of love—which, as intangible as it may be, the poet-speaker is able to transmit directly and precisely—the question remains: How could a feeling of such a moment be mingled with the "Moon's perception" and the "Night's impression," which are inaccessible to the poet-speaker?[118]

Literally, of course, the moon is inaccessible to the speaker, in that she can't reach

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[116] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, pp. 113-114.
[117] Emami, p. 122.
[118] Ghanoonparvar, pp. 82-83.

or influence it. Literally it would have been impossible to graft her beloved to the tree, the water, and the fire. She has access to all these elements of nature via her art, though, because the poem has already established that 1) her poetry becomes eternal in the same way they are, and 2) they are eternal. Nature will end when the world does, and the moon will disintegrate someday. However, within the framework of the first stanza, elements of nature are lasting, the beloved becoming immortal in being figuratively grafted to them via the poem. Just as her chant carried the beloved to "the dawn of eternal growths and blossomings," immortalizing him there, she will mix her love with the eternity of the moon and the night by describing it in the poem we're reading.[119]

From the breadth of life's significance, the speaker turns her gaze to "a room as big as loneliness;" having contemplated the world outside and its significance, she turns

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[119] The relationship between love and immortality is an important one in Farrokhzâd's poetry. The speaker in "Another Birth" makes the connection between the two by means of poetry, but in a remarkably similar passage of "Conquest of the Garden," we see a more direct relationship:

> We found truth in the garden
> in the embarrassed look of a nameless flower
> and we found permanence
> in an endless moment
> when two suns stared at each other.

The moment in "Another Birth" is "masdud," enclosed, while that of "Conquest of the Garden" is "nâmahdud," endless. But the lovers in both poems shares a look that leads to a form of eternity. Nature represents aspects central to the experience in both poems; in "Conquest of the Garden," the couple has discovered a garden that enables their relationship to flourish, and they find love, truth, and immortality there. In "Another Birth," the speaker will immortalize their love by mixing the feeling with eternal elements of nature in a poem.

inward to consider her place in it.

> In a room as big as loneliness
> my heart
> which is as big as love
> looks at the simple pretexts of its happiness
> at the beautiful decay of flowers in the vase
> at the saplings you planted in our garden
> and the song of canaries
> that sing to the size of a window.

The stanza establishes the setting and tone for her musings. She is at home. Her heart as big as love in a room the size of loneliness indicates that she is missing the person from the poem's beginning. The pretexts of happiness may have some association with him, colored with melancholy in his absence. Perhaps he brought her the flowers. They're wilting, reflecting her mood. He planted the saplings, another element of her happiness. She sees them through a window that limits the song of the canaries outside. Her isolation is suggested not only by the room that is the size of loneliness, but by the confining window through which she experiences the outside. Even though she considers things that have given her pleasure, the sadness intensifies. The flowers are wilting. The planter of the trees is not there. The window limits the bird song. The mood intensifies further with the next stanza, where her reflections take on an edge of despair as she considers her life more broadly:

> Ah…
> this is my lot
> this is my lot
> my lot is a sky that is taken away
> at the drop of a curtain

Just as the window contained the canaries' song, the sky vanishes when the curtain falls. In "Conquest of the Garden," the window could not contain the speaker, but in "Green Delusion" the speaker experiences much of the same sense of restriction and pain as the speaker here does. The speakers glimpse nature outside that offers no consolation, and the window in each poem seems to function more as the door to a prison than anything else. By the end of "Another Birth," it becomes clear that the two speakers suffer because of similar life choices, as I will demonstrate shortly. That the speaker of "Another Birth" feels this condition to be her lot in life offers no hope for improvement. I Indeed, her outlook seems to worsen:

> My lot is going down a flight of disused stairs
> to regain something amid putrification and nostalgia.
> My lot is a sad promenade in the garden of memories
> and dying in the grief of a voice that tells me
> I love
> your hands.

Emami writes that, according to Farrokhzâd, 'disused stairs' "indicates a trip down to the cellar where you have stored all the junk."[120] The physical relocation echoes a mental one, a venturing into a part of her mind occupied by the past and memories. She must take a promenade in this garden of the past, and re-experience the pain, and as Ghanoonparvar suggests, the joy of the pain,[121] of hearing her beloved love her hands. She rejoices in being loved, and this experience is what is open to her. It is her lot to experience love this way sometimes, because her lover isn't with her—hence the

[120] Emami, p. 122.
[121] Ghanoonparvar, p. 84.

the putrification [pusidegi], that she associates with the reflection. Well into her self-assessment at this point, the speaker continues her contemplation of her place in the world during her mental promenade. Her narration never crosses completely into the past, but maintains contact with the past and the present simultaneously:

> I will plant my hands in the garden
> I will grow,
> I know, I know, I know,
> and swallows will lay eggs
> in the hollow of my ink-stained hands.
>
> I shall wear
> twin cherries as earrings
> and I shall put dahlia petals on my fingernails.

The memories of cherries and dahlia petals are clearly those of childhood. She can speak of them in the future tense because time here is loose; her memories occupy more than one time frame. Karimi-Hakkak notes that

> The more personal poems of this volume [*Another Birth*]…revolve around experience revivified by memory and poeticized in a nostalgic mode. The speaker looks at her past self as if its memory were about to be snatched away from her. The result is often an atmosphere of two consciousnesses in the poems. While one, the speaker of the line, often standing still by the window, stubbornly gropes in the half-dark universe of her mind, the other is seen playing in the alley down below, chasing butterflies in the yard, picking flowers, and always actively pursuing life.[122]

In "Another Birth," this dual consciousness extends to one memory taking place in two periods. Planting her hands in the garden has significance for the speaker as adult, as well as being an imaginative game she's remembering playing as a child, and later stanzas of the poem justify the interpretation of this passage in both times. Ghanoonparvar notes the

[122] Karimi-Hakkak, p. 19.

image of hands as transition between the stanza before and this one, continuing:

> The question that must be asked is: For what particular reason does she plant her hands in the garden? The answer is found in the previous stanza. These hands are no longer ordinary hands but hands that have become fertile through having been loved. These hands are, therefore, worthy of and have the potential for growth, for her as a poet and a person. And it is in the hollows of the fingers of these hands that swallows will lay eggs to give birth to new life.[123]

Her hands would be stained with ink as those of a poet might be expected to be. The image recreates the relationship between creativity, love, and the eternal as it is represented by the new life of swallows' eggs. This interpretation is consistent with the speaker's consideration of her current life.

The passage is equally suggestive of a childhood memory. Reading it as such forms a natural transition to the later part of the section, where she remembers childhood play in the garden, and describes it in the future tense. "The speaker talks about playing in a garden and imagining that birds would lay their eggs in her hands, ink-stained from school writing exercises. She remembers playing grown-up by putting flower petals on her nails to simulate nail polish and pairs of cherries with stems over her ears in place of earrings."[124] The use of the present tense in the next stanzas makes it clear that the past still exists in the speaker's mind, supporting the reading of the previous section in more than one time frame:

> There is an alley
> where the boys who were in love with me
> still loiter with the same unkempt hair,

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[123] Ibid, p. 85.
[124] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 116.

thin necks and bony legs
and think of the innocent smiles of a little girl
who was blown away by the wind one night.

There is an alley that my heart has stolen
from the streets of my childhood.

The use of the present tense makes it clear that the past still exists in her mind. The alley still exists at the time she speaks, and boys like the ones who loved her probably still loiter there. However, the boys she describes still think of the smiles of the child blown away by the wind, the girl who grew up. They can't still be boys themselves. If they, described as boys, with the thin necks and bony legs of boyhood, still hang around the alley, it is an alley in her mind. Her nostalgia for that time of innocence reminds us of the speaker's current sadness, and the little girl's absence even in that scene of the past emphasizes the fact that she has long since become a lonely woman. The section's second stanza reiterates the idea that this alley still exists in the speaker's heart; perhaps this was a part of what she went down the stairs into the past to regain.

The next two stanzas continue the speaker's consideration of the nature of time, but they represent a shift in the nature of her reflections. She seems to return to some of her earlier contemplation of the way life works. The images here, though, are far from the everyday events she described before. For the rest of the poem, her thoughts about the outside world and her own life run together:

The journey of a form along the line of time
and inseminating the line of time with the form,
a form conscious of an image
returning from a feast in the mirror.

And it is in this way
that someone dies
and someone lives on.

In a passage this abstract, the poet's clarification of each element's reference is of interest. Emami writes that, according to Farrokhzâd, "*Hajm* here indicates the mental side of a person's existence, contrasted with *tasvir* [image] which is the physical side. "The feast in the mirror" for the "image," therefore, is one's life." [125] Noting the difficulty of translating 'hajm,' Emami says, "'Form' is a compromise in our search for a countable noun on the border-line between things defined and fluid."[126]

The idea of a line of time suggests once more the co-existence here of past, present and future. Even though a person may travel along it in one direction on his or her journey through life, 'form' refers to the mind, to thought, and the speaker's mind is clearly not so restricted. As the mind moves through time, it may inseminate it with itself, with its ideas.

The mind equipped to do this is defined in the second half of the stanza: one that is conscious of an image returning from a feast in the mirror that is life. Consciousness of an image involves consciousness of the physical aspect of life, not only of one's reflection in the mirror, but of the external world such as that described in lines 7 through 15 of the poem. Ghanoonparvar argues that

> The mirror functions here as a vehicle for contemplating one's self or one's life…Thus it is only the person who is conscious of the image of herself whose life can be perpetuated. Without this awareness, Farrokhzâd

[125] Emami, p. 122.
[126] Ibid.

> suggests, life in a meaningful sense, artistic life in this case, will not continue. Immortality, therefore, is dependent on impregnating the dry line of time and enriching one's life by being aware of life.[127]

Without consciousness of self and one's life, there seems little chance of impregnating the line of time with ideas or contributions that will survive. But, as Ghanoonparvar suggests, it is not only one's own life that one must be aware of. Artistic immortality depends on being aware of life, that is, life in general. As the stanzas directly addressing the meaning of life indicate, awareness of life involves awareness of the context of the outside world.

Clearly, self awareness in an external framework figures prominently in Farrokhzâd's work, as does its relationship with the creation of something lasting. In "Another Birth," this characterization of immortality is immediately followed by another fundamental principle in Farrokhzâd's poetry, one which forms a kind of elaboration of the first: "No fisherman shall ever find a pearl in a small brook that empties into a pool."

Most things of great value—the creation of something that can impregnate the line of time, for instance—are going to be reached by risking something as pearl divers do, emotionally or physically. Dwelling at the surface means accepting mortality. Farrokhzâd bases a good deal of her poetry on that premise, with her speakers invariably taking that risk and often facing the painful consequences. In considering *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season*, readers don't need to know that those painful consequences were autobiographical for that context to lend weight to

[127] Ghanoonparvar, pp. 86-87.

poems such as “The Wind-up Doll” and “Oh, Jewel-Studded Land,” where individuals and Iranian society are diminished by their focus on the superficial. The frequent representation of the repercussions of doing otherwise emphasizes that the poet does not take risk lightly in her urging to undertake it.

> I know a sad little fairy
> who lives in an ocean
> and ever so softly
> plays her heart into a magic flute
> a sad little fairy
> who dies with one kiss each night
> and is reborn with one kiss each dawn.

Perhaps the little fairy—the speaker in the “room as big as loneliness” who dies “in the grief of a voice”— is sad because she is alone. Hillmann refers to a biographical reading in which the stanza represents Farrokhzâd’s married lover giving her a kiss when he leaves at night to go home, at which point she ‘dies,’ and another kiss that revives her in the morning when he returns.[128] While this seems plausible, especially in the context of the poem’s earlier stanzas, the fairy’s isolation also echoes that of “Green Delusion.” It is the isolation of a woman who has to be alone because that is the price of singing her song—hence the placement of this stanza immediately after the one of the pearl. Perhaps she has scandalized her patriarchal society with her decision to be an outspoken female individual, has answered her critics with “Why should I stop?”

The fairy lives in the deep water of the ocean with the sorrow that is the price of her creative immortality. The means of her immortality is the song she sings, i.e. the

[128] Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman*, p. 115.

poetry she writes. Thus, when she sleeps she goes dormant, or dies for a little while, until she wakes and can sing again. Ghanoonparvar suggests that the 'poet-speaker' is little concerned with "the survival of her name and her work after her actual physical death," and that the immortality she refers to is gained through a "repetitive process" of birth, life, and death. He writes, "Once this process stops, so does the creative life of the person as an artist.[129]

The process Ghanoonparvar describes would render her a "continuously growing artist," and the poem doesn't support the idea that the speaker is interested in the survival of her name, in terms of fame or recognition. But her description of immortalizing her lover via her poetry in the first stanza indicates that she does see poetry as a means of inseminating the line of time with ideas, thus achieving a kind of immortality independent of the physical or creative process of birth, life, and death that Ghanoonparvar outlines. As long as her poem exists, or has an influence on other art, she will be one of the ones who live on, regardless of whether or not her name survives.

The first and final stanzas of "Another Birth" frame the poem. The first declares the speaker's intention to 'sigh' a poem that will immortalize her beloved. She does so in the body of the poem, and the last stanza shows her at work, breathing into her flute. The first stanza declares the power of art, while the last illustrates the process of it. In between those sections, the poem encapsulates Farrokhzâd's worldview.

Observations of everyday events in her environment contribute to the speaker's

[129] Ghanoonparvar, p. 88.

reflections on the meaning of life, suggesting that this outward look is inherent in such contemplation. The section's ending revisits the potential reach of the speaker's creativity and love. Her subsequent inward turn illustrates her loneliness and sense of confinement against the backdrop of simpler childhood days—another frequent theme of Farrokhzâd's poetry—with the planting of her beloved, ink-stained hands maintaining a link with earlier points of focus. The next, more abstract section makes it clear that this is a manifesto, a declaration of how the world works: the individual conscious of herself and life outside herself has the potential to achieve a form of immortality by leaving some creative part of that self behind in the line of time. Such achievement may come at the risk of isolation, as the final stanza illustrates.

Conclusion

Farrokhzâd's poetry frequently centers on the power of the individual to shape her life and the world around her, often simultaneously, in the process of establishing her own individuality. Speakers evaluate themselves in the context of their social environments and the models that their society expects them to follow. They make decisions about whether or not those models suit their individual needs, abandoning or following them accordingly. Awareness of their society implies a degree of responsibility for it. Although the individual may suffer negative consequences for engaging in this process, avoiding it results in negative consequences for both individual and society.

Farrokhzâd's concern with the individual is evident. My challenge in writing this dissertation has been to demonstrate that commitment to the potential power of the individual constitutes the foundation of her last two collections, rather than one characteristic among many. I specify 'potential' because in these poems an individual's ability to live a meaningful life or positively influence her environment depends on her degree of self-awareness, specifically whether or not she is engaged in the process of establishing her individuality. I chose poems for analysis that reflect the importance of various stages of this process, as well as the repercussions of both embarking on it and not doing so.

Of these poems, "It is Only Sound That Remains" most clearly represents an

initial stage of self realization: the recognition of self as distinct from the collective. The speaker evaluates her self and insists on a set of priorities that are unconventional but ideal for her. She depicts people who don't do this, conventional people, as small-minded insects and worms, unaware of broader aspects of life and human creative potential that she associates with nature. Characterizing herself as part of the metaphorical natural world, "a descendant of trees," she refuses to stop speaking out in her poetry—the sound that remains.

This alignment of self and environment (and the awareness of both that the process involves) shapes or defines the individual and her society. "It is Only Sound That Remains," establishes who the speaker is vis-à-vis the world around her, both positive and negative aspects of it. Towards the poem's end, she speaks of her allegiance to the four elements of the of the natural world that she obeys in her dedication to creativity and independent thought. Here is the mind conscious of itself and its surroundings. 'Dwarfs,' on the other hand, are people of small minds, the blind ones unaware of the scope of the four elements and what they represent. "The Wind-up Doll" deals with this same lack of consciousness.

In its portrayal of the dehumanization of a series of women, "The Wind-up Doll" illustrates what can develop if a deliberate recognition of self and environment doesn't take place. The women here are unaware of their environments. The speaker describes them staring at their surroundings with a gaze like that of a corpse, or looking outside without seeing anything, remaining still, blind, and deaf.

Keeping themselves busy with predictable occupations like crossword puzzles, they work to avoid any kind of introspection, one way of coming face to face with the self. They ridicule whatever 'wondrous mystery' might stir this complacency, insisting on sticking with whatever will give them a consistent, unchanging result. This determined unawareness of environment and self has led to the death of personhood, the reduction of the individual to the doll in a felt lined box.

Where "The Wind-Up Doll" depicts the consequences of a lack of awareness to the individual, "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" shows us the consequences to Iranian society. "I Feel Sorry for the Garden," like "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land," portrays Iranians of the 1960s as overly focused on their immediate concerns, to the detriment of their society. The father's immersion in the past, the brother's would be intellectualism, and the sister's western-oriented materialism all echo aspects of "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land." They neither orient themselves in their environment nor develop a sense of themselves as individuals in their self-absorption, and the result is the garden's decay. But the note of hope in "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" that is missing in "Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" is one thinking individual, the speaker, who is conscious of both the garden and her own orientation toward it.

"Oh, Jewel-Studded Land" centers more narrowly on the consequences to Iranian society when individuality and awareness of the environment are absent. The poem opens with the destruction of individuality in the form of the speaker's re-creation as a number. The denial of individual identity suggests the forcing of communal identity. Now that the

speaker is ostensibly a part of the society she spends the rest of the poem observing, she usually speaks in terms of sarcastic approval. But the point of the poem is her consciousness of the aspects of Iranian society that the poem criticizes—simultaneous preoccupation with tradition and westernization, conformity, pseudo-intellectualism, and materialism—and her inability to live in such a society is indicated by the ending, in which she describes her suicide.

In spite of the obvious sarcasm in the speaker's observations, she cannot represent self-awareness, since she is primarily a number. Other Iranians, part of the same individuality-destroying system that the speaker is and invested in the status quo as a result, are likewise limited. The speaker observes the Tehrâni population in pursuit of the materially and intellectually readily accessible. People look to the past for poetry, because it's comfortable. They occupy themselves with gossip magazines, Seiko watches, plastic roses, and the lottery. The more ambitious, perhaps, resort to intellectual posturing, while everyone ignores the fact that much of the population is hungry. Indications of the future suggest that their society cannot overcome the basic denial of individuality that significantly begins the poem.

Chapters 5 through 7 illustrate the repercussions of standing as an individuality to the person who chooses to do so. "Conquest of the Garden" has much in common with "It is Only the Sound That Remains" in the speaker's assessment of her environment, herself, and the incompatibility between the two. Her contrasting of her priorities and the priorities of society, the differences between 'daytime and open windows' and 'fearful

whispering in the dark' reflect the relationship between self-knowledge, knowledge of society, and the development of individuality. That, in turn, reflects the development of the mind that can inseminate the line of time with lasting ideas.

The lovers of "Conquest of the Garden" take some significant risks in leaving the sullen window, going out to pick the apple from the distant branch, and turning their backs on the city to search for meaning in nature. For them, it pays off, not because there aren't repercussions (the malice behind the windows at the end makes that clear), but because those repercussions pale in comparison with the positive outcome of their decisions. They reach the pearl: freedom in a loving relationship and the consciousness that they have become individuals able to live independently in an atmosphere of joy and growth.

Like the speaker of "Conquest of the Garden," the speaker of "Green Delusion" relates a story of individuality that led her away from conventional society: "How the spirit of the wilderness took me/and the moon's magic distanced me from the flock's faith!" The venture has had more painful results for the speaker of "Green Delusion," however.

As the initial face-off in the mirror suggests, the poem centers on self-knowledge. The need for it drives her to face annihilation at the poem's end. She has been through the same process that speakers in the above poems have, recognizing that she does not belong in her society and deciding to leave it. Although there is nothing to suggest that she thinks she should have chosen differently (the flock is still the flock and she still

speaks of the moon's magic), she has achieved nothing in deciding to live as an individual. This lessens her ability to endure her separation from the society she describes so longingly. The speaker fights against the realization of her failure pressing against her mental defenses, but achieves a kind of victory in her acceptance of it at the poem's end, in her final commitment to facing her own gaze in the mirror.

"My Lover" reflects awareness of an unconventional self less directly than "Green Delusion" does, but it is no less relevant to the poem. The speaker doesn't tell us who she is and how she interacts with her environment. Rather, she demonstrates all of that in her celebration of her lover, mixing the conventional and the unconventional in a distinctly individual way. He is both simple and heroic, rustic and bloodthirsty, while she takes the initiative as a woman writing a love poem, yet describes her lover's conquest of her with pleasure. That she clearly recognizes the iconoclastic tendencies of her observations is confirmed by the poem's ending.

This last stanza puts the rest of the poem in a different perspective, illuminating the speaker's awareness of herself in the context of her environment. The speaker knows that she is walking outside the bounds of conformity, and the reference to the "strange, ominous land" suggests that she feels threatened, as does her protection of her lover. That she has spoken in the way she has indicates a commitment to the raising of her individual voice in a hostile environment, much as in "It is Only Sound That Remains."

Their existence as individuals, and the speaker's presentation of herself and him as such, represent a challenge to an Iranian society that views such behavior as

threatening. They are not paying the kind of cost that the speaker of "Green Delusion" describes, because they are unified here. But the many Farrokhzâd poems that refer to a lonely woman suggest that in her experience of the world, such a sense of companionship is frequently absent. Such is certainly the case throughout "Another Birth," especially in the final stanza of the small fairy.

Because of the challenges that Farrokhzâd's poetry represented to Iranian society of the 1950s and 1960s, as outlined in the introduction, writing it would always involve risking social alienation. "Another Birth" explains why the poet was willing to keep writing the way she did, with its passages on the relationship between risk (for her, creativity) and achieving significance (artistic immortality). This relationship between creativity and immortality is also evident in "It is Only the Sound That Remains." The speaker of that poem, mindful of the bird's advice to commit [temporary] flight to [eternal] memory, refuses to stop speaking/creating the poem we read. Immediately after one of her repetitions of "Why should I stop?," she describes nursing unripe bunches of wheat, emphasizing the incorporation of part of herself in her creation of the lasting, the supporter of life. It directly reflects what we see in the first stanza of "Another Birth," where her whole being is the chant that she sighs, also leading to immortality associated with nature.

Love, creativity, consciousness of mortality, and the relationship between the three are fundamental aspects of Farrokhzâd's poetry. But behind all of those elements, driving them and making them possible, is the quest for self-awareness and the

consequent establishment of individuality—marks of the modern writer.

Many modern writers share these or similar tendencies, as Irving Howe suggests in "The Idea of the Modern." However, as Howe notes, the subject is complex enough that "It is hard to say whether a given writer, or a strand in the work of a writer, comes under the rubric of modernism."[130] Although Farrokhzâd is a modernist poet by any measure, including Howe's, she stands apart from the modern paradigm as Howe outlines it in several important respects. Howe describes the modernist writer breaking from society, much as I have noted Farrokhzâd speakers doing:

> Since the beginnings of the bourgeois era, a central problem for reflective men has been the relation of the individual to the collectivity. In modern fiction, this problem often appears as a clash between a figure of consciousness who embodies the potential of the human and a society moving in an impersonal rhythm that is hostile or, what is perhaps worse, indifferent to that potential.[131]

> Modern writers find that they begin to work at a moment when the culture is marked by a prevalent style of perception and feeling; and their modernity consists in a revolt against this prevalent style, an unyielding rage against the official order.[132]

But he describes the modernist outlook in the West as undergoing three stages vis-à-vis the self:

> In its early stages…modernism declares itself as an inflation of the self, a transcendental and orgiastic aggrandizement of matter and event in behalf of personal vitality. In the middle stages, the self begins to recoil from externality and devotes itself…to a minute examination of its own inner dynamics: freedom, compulsion, caprice. In the late stages, there occurs an

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[130] Irving Howe, "The Idea of the Modern," *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p. 12.

[131] Ibid, p. 34.

[132] Ibid, p. 13.

> emptying-out of the self, a revulsion from wearisomeness of individuality and psychological gain. [133]

There may be some room for discussion on the question of whether Farrokhzâd passed through the first two stages, especially the second. But one of her later works alone, "It is Only the Sound That Remains," rules out the possibility that she felt individuality—hers or anyone else's—to be wearisome, or that any kind of 'emptying-out of the self' had taken place.

Farrokhzâd does occasionally seem to wonder if her development of individuality has been significant, as in "Green Delusion." Yet the speaker in that poem presses on to a devastating conclusion in the interest of self-awareness, which agrees with Howe's characterization of the modern hero:

> If the modern hero decides that the world is beyond changing, he may try…to create an hermetic world of his own in which an unhappy few live by a self-willed code that makes possible—they tell themselves—struggle, renewal, and honorable defeat.[134]

> The modern hero moves from the heroic deed to the heroism of consciousness, a heroism often only available in defeat…And in consciousness he seeks those moral ends which the hero is traditionally said to have found through the deed.[135]

Even at her unhappiest, her determination to continue that struggle negates the final characteristic of modernism that Howe discusses, nihilism. According to Howe, among the attributes of nihilism is "a loss of those tacit impulsions toward an active and striving existence that we do not even know to be at work in our consciousness until we have

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[133] Ibid, pp. 14-15.
[134] Ibid, p. 36.
[135] Ibid.

become aware of their decline."[136] He continues, "Fundamentally, then, nihilism comes to imply a loss of connection with the sources of life, so that both in experience and literature it is always related to, while analytically distinguishable from, the blight of boredom."[137] While God as the source of life seems irrelevant in *Another Birth* and *Let Us Believe in the Coming of a Cold Season*, his absence engenders neither the despair her speakers sometimes experience, nor boredom. 'Impulsions toward an active and striving existence' mark most of Farrokhzâd's poetry to the end of her life. The final stanza of "Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season" demonstrates both the belief in a cold season, a time of endings and pain, and the conviction that there will be new beginnings along with it:

> Perhaps the truth was those two young hands, those two young hands
> that were buried beneath the endless fall of snow.
> And next year,
> when spring sleeps with the sky behind the window,
> and green fountains of joyful stems
> stream from her body,
> it will blossom, o my dear,
> o my dearest one.
>
> Let us believe in the coming of the cold season.[138]

[136] Ibid, p. 37.
[137] Ibid, p. 38.
[138] Farrokhzâd, "Imân Biyâvarim beh Âghâz-e Fasl-e Sard" [Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season] *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season*, p. 415.

Appendix

تنها صداست که میماند

چرا توقف کنم، چرا؟
پرنده ها به جستجوی جانب آبی رفته اند
افق عمودی است
افق عمودی است و حرکت: فواره وار
و در حدود بینش
سیاره های نورانی میچرخند
زمین در ارتفاع به تکرار میرسد
و چاه های هوائی
به نقب های رابطه تبدیل میشود
و روز وسعتی است
که در مخیله ی تنگ کرم روزنامه نمیگنجد

چرا توقف کنم؟
راه از میان مویرگهای حیات میگذرد
کیفیت محیط کشتی زهدان ماه
سلولهای فاسد را خواهد کشت
و در فضای شیمیائی بعد از طلوع
تنها صداست
صدا که جذب ذره های زمان خواهد شد
چرا توقف کنم؟

چه میتواند باشد مرداب
چه میتواند باشد جز جای تخم ریزی حشرات فساد
افکار سردخانه را جنازه های بادکرده رقم میزنند.
نامرد، در سیاهی
فقدان مردیش را پنهان کرده است
و سوسک...آه
وقتی که سوسک سخن میگوید
چرا توقف کنم؟
همکاری حروف سربی بیهوده ست.
همکاری حروف سربی
اندیشه ی حقیررا نجات نخواهد داد.
من از سلاله ی درختانم
تنفس هوای مانده ملولم میکند

پرنده ای که مرده بود به من پند داد که پرواز را بخاطر بسپارم

نهایت تمامی نیروها پیوستن است، پیوستن
به اصل روشن خورشید
و ریختن به شعور نور
طبیعی است
که آسیاب های بادی میپوسند
چرا توقف کنم؟
من خوشه های نارس گندم را
به زیر پستان میگیرم
و شیر میدهم.

صدا، صدا، تنها صدا
صدای خواهش شفاب آب به خاری شدن
صدای ریزش نور ستاره بر جدار مادگی خاک
صدای انعقاد نطفه ی معنی
و بسط ذهن مشترک عشق
صدا، صدا، صدا، تنها صداست که میماند

در سرزمین قد کوتاهان
معیارهای سنجش
همیشه بر مدار صفر سفر کرده اند
چرا توقف کنم؟
من از عناصرچهارگانه اطاعت میکنم
و کار تدوین نظامنامه قلبم
کار حکومت محلی کوران نیست

مرا به زوزه ی دراز توحش
در عضو جنسی حیوان چکار
مرا به حرکت حقیر کرم در خلاء گوشتی چکار
مرا تبار خونی گلها به زیستن متعهد کرده است
تبار خونی گلها میدانید؟

It is Only Sound That Remains

Why should I stop, why?
Birds have gone looking for the blue side.
The horizon is vertical
the horizon is vertical, and movement: fountain-like
and at the limits of vision
spin shining planets.

At elevation, the earth attains repetition
and wells of air become tunnels of connection.
Why should I stop?
The road passes through the capillaries of life.
The fertile environment of the moon's womb
will kill the corrupt cells
and in the chemical space after sunrise
there is only sound,
sound that will be absorbed in the particles of time.
Why should I stop?

What can a swamp be?
What can it be besides a spawning ground for corrupt insects?
Swollen corpses write down the thoughts of the morgue…
The coward has hidden his lack of courage
in darkness
And the insect…Ah
when the insect speaks,
why should I stop?
Cooperation with lead letters is futile.
Cooperation with lead letters
will not save petty thoughts.
I am a descendant of trees.
Breathing stagnant air wearies me.
A bird that had died advised me to memorize the flight

The end of all forces is union, union
with the bright essence of the sun
and pouring into the consciousness of light.
It is natural
for windmills to fall apart.
Why should I stop?
I take sheaves of unripe wheat
to my breast
and nurse them.

Sound, sound, only sound
the sound of water's clear wish to flow,
the sound of starlight pouring over
the layer of earth's femininity,
the sound of meaning's embryo forming
and the expansion of the common mind of love

Sound, sound, sound, it is only sound that remains.

In the land of dwarfs,
the criteria of comparison
have always traveled in the orbit of zero.
Why should I stop?
I obey the four elements,
and compiling the constitution of my heart
is not work for the local government of the blind.

What have I to do with the long howling of savagery
in the sexual organs of animals?
What have I to do with the lowly movement of a worm
in a fleshy vacuum?
The bloody origin of flowers has bound me to life.
The bloody origin of flowers, do you know?

پرنده مردنیست

دلم گرفته است
دلم گرفته است
به ایوان میروم و انگشتانم را
بر پوست کشیده ی شب میکشم
چراغهای رابطه تاریکند
چراغهای رابطه تاریکند

کسی مرا به آفتاب
معرفی نخواهد کرد
کسی مرا به میهمانی گنجشگها نخواهد برد
پرواز را بخاطر بسپار
پرنده مردنیست

The Bird is Mortal

My heart is heavy
My heart is heavy

I go to the porch and draw my fingers
across the night's drawn skin
The connecting lamps are dark,

The connecting lamps are dark

No one will introduce me
to the sun;
No one will take me to the sparrows' party.
Commit flight to memory—
The bird is mortal.

عروسک کوکی

بیش از اینها، آه، آری
بیش از اینها میتوان خاموش ماند

میتوان ساعات طولانی
با نگاهی چون نگاه مردگان، ثابت
خیره شد در دود یک سیگار
خیره شد در شکل یک فنجان
در گلی بیرنگ، بر قالی
در خطی موهوم، بر دیوار

میتوان با پنجه های خشک
پرده را یکسو کشید و دید
در میان کوچه باران تند میبارد
کودکی با بادباکهای رنگینش
ایستاده زیر یک طاقی
گاری فرسوده ای میدان خالی را
با شتابی پر هیاهو ترک میگوید

میتوان بر جای باقی ماند
در کنار پرده، اما کور، اما کر

میتوان فریاد زد
با صدائی سخت کاذب، سخت بیگانه
"دوست دارم"
میتوان در بازوان چیره یک مرد
ماده ای زیبا و سالم بود

با تنی چون سفره چرمین
با دو پستان درشت سخت
میتوان در بستر یک مست، یک دیوانه، یک ولگرد
عصمت یک عشق را آلود

میتوان با زیرکی تحقیر کرد
هر معمّای شگفتی را
میتوان تنها به حل جدولی پرداخت
میتوان تنها به کشف پاسخی بیهوده دل خوش ساخت
پاسخی بیهوده، آری پنج یا شش حرف

میتوان یک عمر زانو زد
با سری افکنده، در پای ضریحی سرد
میتوان در گور مجهولی خدا را دید
میتوان با سکه ای ناچیز ایمان یافت
میتوان در حجره های مسجدی پوسید
چون زیارتنامه خوانی پیر
میتوای چون صفر در تفریق و جمع و ضرب
حاصلی پیوسته یکسان داشت
میتوان چشم ترا در پیله قهرش
دکمه بیرنگ کفش کهنه ای پنداشت
میتوان چون آب در گودال خود خشکید

میتوان زیبائی یک لحظه را با شرم
مثل یک عکس سیاه مضحک فوری
در ته صندوق مخفی کرد
میتوان در قاب خالی مانده یک روز
نقش یک محکوم، یا مغلوب، یا مصلوب را آویخت
میتوان با صورتکها رخنه دیوار را پوشاند
میتوان با نقشهائی پوچ تر آمیخت

میتوان همچون عروسکهای کوکی بود
با دو چشم شیشه ای دنیای خود را دید
میتوان در جعبه ای ماهوت
با تنی انباشته از کاه
سالها در لابلای تور و پولک خفت
میتوان با هر فشار هرزه دستی
بی سبب فریاد کرد و گفت
"آه، من بسیار خوشبختم"

The Wind-Up Doll

More than this, ah yes,
one can stay silent more than this.

For long hours
one can stare at the smoke of a cigarette

with a gaze like that of a corpse, fixed
one can stare at the shape of a tea cup,
at a faded flower in a carpet,
at an imaginary line on a wall.

One can draw the curtain aside
with dry fingers, and
watch the rain pouring down into the alley,
a child with colorful balloons
standing under an arch,
a rickety cart rattling hastily
out of the empty square.
One can stay still there
next to the curtain, but blind, but deaf.

One can cry out
in a voice clearly false and alien,
"I love…"
In the dominating arms of a man,
one can be a beautiful, healthy female.

With a body like a leather table cloth,
with two large, firm breasts,
one can pollute the purity of a love
in bed with a drunk, a mad man, a vagrant.

One can cleverly ridicule every wondrous mystery.
One can become involved with solving crossword puzzles only
One can create a happy heart only
with the discovery of an empty answer
an empty answer, yes, in five or six letters.

One can kneel a lifetime
with bowed head at the foot
        of a cold shrine.
One can see God in a nameless grave.
One can get faith with a worthless coin.
One can rot in the chambers of a mosque
like an old prayer reader.

One can always get the same result,
like zero in addition, subtraction, and multiplication.

One can take your eye, in its angry lid,
for a colorless button from an old shoe.
One can dry up like water in its puddle.
With shame,
one can hide the beauty of a moment
at the bottom of a trunk
like a laughable black and white picture.
In the empty frame of a day,
one can hang the picture of someone condemned,
or defeated, or crucified.
One can cover cracks in the wall with masks;
one can mingle with images still emptier than these.
One can be just like a wind up doll,
seeing one's world with two glass eyes.
One can sleep for years in a felt-lined box
on lace and tinsel,
body stuffed with straw.
With every lascivious squeeze of a hand,
one can cry out for no reason:
"Ah, how happy I am!"

دلم برای باغچه میسوزد

کسی به فکر گلها نیست
کسی به فکر ماهی نیست
کسی نمیخواهد
باور کند که باغچه دارد میمیرد
که قلب باغچه در زیر آفتاب ورم کرده است
که ذهن باغچه دارد آرام آرام
از خاطرات سبز تهی میشود
و حس باغچه انگار
چیزی مجردست که در انزوای باغچه پوسیده ست.

حیاط خانه ی ما تنهاست
حیاط خانه ی ما
در انتظاربارش یک ابر ناشناس
خمیازه میکشد
و حوض خانه ی ما خالی ست

ستاره های کوچک بی تجربه
از ارتفاع درختاان به خاک می افتند

و از میان پنجره های پریده رنگ خانه ی ماهی ها
شبها صدای سرفه می آید
حیاط خانه ی ما تنهاست.
پدر میگوید:
"از من گذشته ست
از من گذشته ست
من بار خود را بردم
و کار خود را کردم."
و در اتاقش، از صبح تا غروب،
یا شاهنامه میخواند
یا ناسخ التواریخ
پدر به مادر میگوید:
"لعنت به هر چه ماهی و هر چه مرغ
وقتی که من بمیرم دیگر
چه فرق میکند که باغچه باشد
یا باغچه نباشد
برای من حقوق تقاعد کافی ست."

مادر تمام زندگیش
سجاده ایست گسترده
در آستان وحشت دوزخ
مادر همیشه در ته هر چیزی
دنبال جای پای معصیتی میگردد
و فکر میکند که باغچه را کفر یک گیاه
آلوده کرده است
مادر تمام روزدعا میخواند
مادر گناه کار طبیعی ست
و فوت میکند به تمام گلها
و فوت میکند به تمام ماهی ها
و فوت میکند به خودش
مادر در انتظار ظهور است
و بخششی که نازل خواهد شد

برادرم به باغچه میگوید قبرستان
برادرم به اغتشاش علف ها میخندد
و از جنازه ی ماهی ها
که زیر پوست بیمار آب
به ذره های فاسد تبدیل میشوند
شماره بر میدارد

برادرم به فلسفه معتاد است
برادرم شفای باغچه را

در انهدام باغچه میداند
او مست میکند
و مشت میزند به در و دیوار
و سعی میکند که بگوید
بسیار دردمند و خسته و مأیوس است

او ناامیدیش را هم
مثل شناسنامه و تقویم و دستمال و فندک و خودکارش
همراه خود به کوچه و بازار می برد
و ناامیدیش
آنقدر کوچک است که هر شب
در ازدحام میکده گم میشود.

و خواهرم که دوست گل ها بود
و حرف های ساده ی قلبش را
وقتی که مادر او را میزد
به جمع مهربان و ساکت آنها میبرد
و گاه گاه خانواده ی ماهی ها را
به آفتاب و شیرینی مهمان میکرد...
او خانه اش در آنسوی شهر است
او در میان خانه ی مصنوعیش
با ماهیان قرمز مصنوعیش
و در پناه عشق همسر مصنوعیش
و زیر شاخه های درختان سیب مصنوصی
آوازهای مصنوعی میخواند
و بچه های طبیعی میسازد
او
هر وقت که به دیدن ما می آید
و گوشه های دامنش از فقر باغچه آلوده میشود
حمام ادکلن میگیرد
او
هر وقت که دیدن ما می آید
آبستن است.

حیاط خانه ی ما تنهاست
حیاط خانه ی ما تنهاست
تمام روز
از پشت در صدای تکه تکه شدن می آید
و منفجر شدن
همسایه های ما همه در خاک باغچه هاشان بجای گل
خمپاره و مسلسل میکارند
همسایه های ما همه بر روی حوض های کاشیشان

شرپوش میگذارند
و حوض های کاشی
بی آنکه خود بخواهند
انبارهای مخفی باروتند
و بچه های کوچه ی ما کیفهای مدرسه شان را
از بمب های کوچک
پر کرده اند
حیاط خانه ی ما گیج است.

من از زمانی
که قلب خود را گم کرده است میترسم
من از تصور بیهودگی اینهمه دست
و از تجسم بیگانگی اینهمه صورت میترسم

من مثل دانش آموزی
که درس هندسه اش را
دیوانه وار دوست می دارد تنها هستم
و فکر میکنم که باغچه را میشود به بیمارستان برد
من فکر میکنم...
من فکر میکنم...
من فکر میکنم...
و قلب باغچه در زیر آفتاب ورم کرده است
و ذهن باغچه دارد آرام آرام
از خاطرات سبز تهی میشود.

I Feel Sorry for the Garden

No one is thinking about the flowers,
no one is thinking about the fish,
no one wants to believe that the garden is dying,
that the garden's heart has swollen under the sun,
that the garden's mind is slowly being drained of green memories.
And the garden's senses seem an abstract thing
rotting in solitude in a corner of the garden.

Our courtyard garden is lonely.
Our garden yawns in anticipation of an unknown rain cloud,
and our pool is empty.
Inexperienced little stars
fall to the earth from treetop heights.

And from the pale windows of the fishes' abode
the sound of coughing comes at night.
Our courtyard garden is lonely.
Father says:
It's too late for me.
It's over for me.
I shouldered my burden and did my share.
And in his room, from dawn to dusk,
he reads either the *Shâhnâmeh*
or *Nâsekh ol-Tavârikh*.
Father says to Mother: To hell with all birds and fish.
When I die,
then what difference will it make
that there is a garden or there isn't a garden?
My retirement pension is enough for me.

Mother's whole life
is a prayer rug spread
at the threshold of fears of hell.
At the bottom of everything
Mother always searches for traces of sin
and thinks that a plant's apostasy has contaminated the garden.
Mother prays all day long.
Mother is a natural sinner
and she breathes prayers on all the flowers
and breathes on all the fish,
and exorcises herself.
Mother is waiting for the coming
and forgiveness to descend upon the earth.

My brother calls the garden a graveyard.
My brother laughs at the profusion of weeds
and keeps a count of the fish corpses
that decompose under the water's sick skin.
My brother is addicted to philosophy.
My brother thinks the cure for the garden lies in its destruction.
He gets drunk and bangs on doors and walls
and tries to say that he is very weary and despondent and despairing.
He carries his despair
along with his identity card, pocket calendar,
handkerchief, lighter, and ballpoint pen
to the street and the bazaar.

His despair is so small
that every night
it gets lost in the crowd at the bar.
And my sister who was the flowers' friend
and took her heart's simple words to their kind and silent company
When Mother spanked her
and occasionally offered sun and cookies to the family of fish…
her house is on the other side of the city.
In her artificial home,
with her artificial goldfish,
and in the security of her artificial husband's love,
and under the branches of artificial apple trees,
she sings artificial songs and produces real babies.
Whenever she comes to visit us
and the hem of her skirt gets soiled with the garden's poverty,
she takes a perfume bath.
Every time she comes to visit us,
she is pregnant.

Our garden is lonely,
our garden is lonely.
All day long
from behind the door come sounds of shattering and explosion.
All our neighbors plant
bombs and machineguns in their gardens instead of flowers.
All our neighbors cover their tiled ponds,
which become unwitting secret storehouses of gunpowder.
And the children along our street have filled their schoolbags
with small bombs.
Our garden is confused.

I fear an age
that has lost its heart.
I am scared of the thought of so many useless hands
and of picturing so many estranged faces.
Like a school child
madly in love with her geometry lesson, I am alone.
And I think that the garden can be taken to a hospital.
I think…
I think…
I think…
And the garden's heart has swollen under the sun,

and the garden’s mind is slowly
being emptied of green memories.

ای مرز پر گوهر

فاتح شدم
خود را به ثبت رساندم
خود را به نامی در یک شناسنامه مزین کردم
و هستیم به یک شماره مشخص شد
پش زنده باد ٦٧٨ صادره از بخش ٥ ساکن

دیگر خیالم از همه سو راحتست
آغوش مهربان مام وطن
پستانک سوابق پر افتخار تاریخی
لالائی تمدن و فرهنگ
وجق وجق جقجقه قانون
آه
دیگر خیالم از همه سو راحتست

از فرط شادمانی
رفتم کنار پنجره، با اشتیاق، ششصد و هفتاد و هشت
بار هوا را که از غبار پهن
و بوی خاکروبه و ادرار، منقبض شده بود
درون سینه فرو دادم
و زیر ششصد و هفتاد و هشت قبض بدهکاری
و روی ششصد و هفتاد و هشت تقاضای کار نوشتم
فروغ فرخزاد

در سرزمین شعر و گل و بلبل
موهبتیست زیستن، آنهم
وقتی که واقعیت موجود بودن تو پس از سال های
سال پذیرفته میشود

جائی که من
با اولین نگاه رسمیم از لای پرده، ششصد و هفتاد وهشت شاعر را میبینم
که، حقه باز ها، همه در هیئت غریب گدایان
در لای خاکروبه، به دنبال وزن و قافیه میگردند
و از صدای اولین قدم رسمیم
یکباره، از میان لجن زارهای تیره، ششصد و هفتاد وهشت بلبل مرموز
که از سر تفنن
خود را به شکل ششصد و هفتاد و هشت کااغ سیاه پیر در آورده اند
با تنبلی بسوی حاشیه روز میپرند

و اولین نفس زدن رسمیم
آغشته میشود به بوی ششصد و هفتاد و هشت شاخه گل سرخ
محصول کار خانجات عظیم پلاسکو
موهبتیست زیستن، آری
درزادگاه شیخ ابودلقک کمانچه کش فوری
و شیخ ای دل ای دل تنبک تبارتنبوری
شهر ستارگان گران وزن ساق و باسن و پستان وپشت جلد و هنر
گهواره مؤلفان فلسفه "ای بابا به من چه ولش کن"
مهد مسابقات المپیک هوش—وای!
جائی که دست به هر دستگاه نقلی تصویر و صوت میزنی، از آن
بوق نبوغ نابغه ای تازه سال میآید
و بر گزیدگان فکری ملت
وقتی که در کلاس اکابر حضور میبابند
هر یک به روی سینه، ششصد و هفتاد و هشت کباب پزبرقی
و بر دو دست، ششصد و هفتاد و هشت ساعت ناوزر ردیف کرده و میدانند
که ناتوانی از خواص تهی کیسه بودنست، نه نادانی

فاتح شدم بله فاتح شدم
اکنون به شادمانی این فتح
در پای آینه، با افتخار، ششصد و هفتاد وهشت شمع نسیه میافروزم
و میپرم به روی طاقچه تا، با اجازه، چند کلامی
درباره فوائد قانونی حیات به عرض حضورتان برسانم
و اولین کلنگ ساختمان رفیع زندگیم را
همراه با طنین کف زدنی پر شور
با فرق فرق خویش بکوبم

من زنده ام، بله، مانند زنده رود، که یکروز زنده بود
و از تمام آنچه که در انحصار مردم زنده ست، بهره خواهم برد

میتونم از فردا
در کوچه های شهر، که سرشار از مواهب ملیست
و در میان سایه های سبکبار تیرهای تلگراف
گردش کنان قدم بر دارم
و با غرور، ششصد و هفتاد و هشت بار، به دیوار مستراح های عمومی بنویسم
خط نوشتم که خر کند خنده

من میتوانم از فردا
همچون وطن پرست غیوری
سهمی از ایده آل عظیمی که اجتماع
هر چارشنبه بعد از ظهر، آنرا
با اشتیاق و دلهره دنبال میکند
در قلب و مغز خویش داشته باشم

سهمی از آن هزار هوس پرور هزار ریالی
که میتوان به مصرف یخچال و مبل و پرده رساندش
یا آنکه در ازای ششصد و هفتاد و هشت رأی طبیعی
آنرا شبی به ششصد و هفتاد و هشت مرد وطن بخشید

من میتوانم از فردا
در پستوی مغازه خاچیک
بعد از فرو کشیدن چندین نفس ز چند گرم جنس دست اول خالص
و صرف چند بادیه پپسی کولای ناخالص
و پخش چند یا حق و یا هوو وغ وغ و هوهو
رسما به مجمع فضلای فکور و فضله های فاضل روشنفکر
و پیروان مکتب داخ داخ تاراخ تاراخ بپیوندم
و طرح اولین رمان بزرگم را
که در حوالی سنه یکهزاد و ششصد و هفتاد و هشت شمسی تبریزی
رسما به زیر دستگاه تهی دست چاپ خواهد رفت
بر هر دو پشت ششصد و هفتاد و هشت پاکت
اشنوی اصل ویژه بریزم

من میتوانم از فردا
با اعتماد کامل
خود را برای ششصد و هفتاد و هشت دوره به یک
دستگاه مسند مخمل پوش
در مجلس تجمع و تأمین آتیه
یا مجلس سپاس و ثنا میهمان کنم
زیرا که من تمام مندرجات مجله هنر و دانش
و تملق و کرنش را میخوانم
و شیوه "درست نوشتن" را میدانم

من در میان توده سازنده ای قدم به عرصه هستی نهاده ام
که گر چه نان ندارد، اما بجای آن
میدان دید باز و وسیعی دارد
که مرزهای فعلی جغرافیائیش
از جانب شمال، به میدان پر طراوت و سبز تیر
و از جنوب، به میدان باستانی اعدام
و در مناطق پر ازدحام ، به میدان توپخانه رسیده ست

و در پناه آسمان درخشان و امن امنیتش
از صبح تا غروب، ششصد و هفتاد و هشت قوی قوی
هیکل گچی
به اتفاق صصشد و هفتاد و هشت فرشته
ـــ آنهم فرشته از خاک و گل سرشته ـــ
به تبلیغ طرحهای سکون و سکوت مشغولند

فاتح شدم بله فاتح شدم
پس زنده باد ٦٧٨ صادره از بخش ٥ ساکن تهران
که در پناه پشتکار و اراده
به آنچنان مقام رفیعی رسیده است، که در چارچوب پنجره ای
در ارتفاع ششصد و هفتاد و هشت متری سطح زمین
قرار گرفته ست

و افتخار این را دارد
که میتواند از همان دریچه— نه از راه پلکان —ار دوخ
دیوانه وار به دامان مهربان مام وطن سرنگون کند

و آخرین وصیتش اینست
که در ازای ششصد و هفتاد و هشت سکه، حضرت
استاد آبراهام صهبا
مرثیه ای به قافیه کشک در رثای حیاتش رقم زند

Oh, Jewel-Studded Land

I've won,
I registered myself
I adorned myself with a name,
in an identity card
and my existence has become
defined with a number.
Therefore, long live 678,
resident of Tehran,
long live 678 issued at precinct 5.

My worries are over now
in the homeland's loving bosom.
My pacifier: glorious historical traditions,
my lullaby: civilization and culture
my toy rattle: the rattle box of law.
Ah
My worries are over now.

Overjoyed,
I went to the window, and eagerly 678 times
inhaled the air compacted with dung dust
and the odor of garbage and urine.

And on 678 bills
and on 678 job applications I wrote:
“Forugh Farrokhzad.”

In the land of poetry and roses and nightingales,
it is a blessing to live, especially
when the reality of your existence
is acknowledged after years and years,
a place where
through the curtains with my first official look
I see 678 poets,
charlatans all of them,
a strange beggarly company,
searching for rhymes and meters
in the garbage.

And at the sound of my first official steps,
suddenly from the dark slime 678
furtive nightingales
who for fun
have transformed themselves into
678 old black crows
fly lazily toward the edge of day.
And my first official breath
mingles with the smell of
678 stemmed red roses,
products of the great Plasco factories.

Yes, it is a blessing to live
in the birthplace of Sheikh Abu Dalqak
the opium-addict kamancheh player
and Sheikh Ay Del Ay Del
the lute-playing descendent of drums
the city of superstar legs and derriéres and breasts
and cover pictures and Art magazine,
cradle of authors of the philosophy “so what?
what’s it to me? forget it,”
cradle of IQ olympics—o my!—
a place where when you touch any transmitter of pictures and sound,
from it the brilliant blare of a young genius blurts out,
and when the nation’s intellectual elite put in an appearance at an adult education class
their chests are decorated with 678 kabob cookers

and on both wrists 678 Seiko watches
and they are certain that weakness derives from empty pockets,
not from ignorance.

I won, yes I won
Now in celebration of this victory
in front of the mirror,
with pride I light 678 candles bought on credit
and leap onto the mantle so that,
with your permission,
I might address a few words to you
concerning the legal advantages of life
and to the resonance of enthusiastic applause
break ground with the pickaxe
on the part at the top of my head
for the lofty edifice of my life.

I'm alive, yes,
like Zendeh Rud River that was alive one day
and from all that is exclusively the right of living people
I'll derive benefit.

As of tomorrow,
in the city's side streets
brimming with national blessings
and in the lighthearted shadows of telegraph poles,
I'll stroll along and proudly write on lavatory walls 678 times:
"I wrote this line to make donkeys laugh."
As of tomorrow like a zealous patriot
I'll have in heart and mind a share in the great ideal
that society every Wednesday afternoon follows with anxious excitement,
a share of those 1,000-riyal notes
which can be used for refrigerators, furniture, and curtains
or which for 678 natural votes can be donated one evening to 678 patriotic men.

As of tomorrow at the back of Khâchik's shop
after inhaling several snorts of a few grams of first hand pure stuff
and consuming several not-so-pure pepsis
and uttering several Sufi exclamations,
I'll officially join the association of prominent pensive learned people
and enlightened erudite excrement
and followers of the school of la-dee-da

and scribble the plot outline of my first great novel
which around the year 1678 Shamsi-e Tabrizi
will be formally submitted to a bankrupt press
on both sides of 678 packs of genuine Vizheh Oshno cigarettes.

As of tomorrow
with complete confidence
I'll treat myself to one velvet-covered seat for 678 sessions
in the assembly of assembling
and in the guaranteeing future or the assembly of gratitude and praise
because I read *Art and Science* and *Flattery and Bowing* magazines
from cover to cover
and I know the "correct writing" method.

I have strode into the arena of existence
in the midst of a creative populace
who although they have no bread
have instead an open and spacious vista
presently bounded on the north by verdant Tir Square
and on the south by historic E'dâm Square
and in those overcrowded neighborhoods reaching Tupkhâneh Square.

And in the shelter of its shining sky
and secure in its security
from morning till night
678 big plaster swans accompanied by 678 angels,
angels made of mud and clay,
are busy advertising plans for inaction and silence.

I've won,
Yes I've won:
therefore long live 678, resident of Tehran,
long live 678, issued at precinct 5,
who by dint of determination and perseverance
has reached such a lofty station
that she now stands in the frame of a window 678 meters above the ground
and has the honor of being able
from that very window,
not by way of the stairs,
to hurl herself madly down
into the affectionate bosom of the motherland.
And her final will and testament is this

that, for 678 coins, that honorable master Abraham Sahba
compose an elegy in the rhyme of sing song eulogizing her life.

فتح باغ

آن کلاغی که پرید
از فراز سر ما
و فرو رفت در اندیشه آشفته ابری ولگرد
و صدایش همچون نیوه کوتاهی پهنای افق را پیمود
رەش ەب درب دەاوخ. دوخ اب ار ام ربخ

همه میدانند
همه میدانند
که من و تو از آن روزنه سرد عبوس
باغ را دیدیم
و از آن شاخه بازیگر دور از دست
سیب را چیدیم

همه میترسند
همه میترسند، اما من و تو
به چراغ و آب و آینه پیوستیم
و نترسیدیم

سخن از پیوند سست دو نام
و همآغوشی در اوراق کهنه یک دفتر نیست
سخن از گیسوی خوشبخت منست
با شقایق های سوخته بوسه تو
و صمیمیت تن هامان، در طراری
و درخشیدن عریانیمان
مثل فلس ماهی ها در آب
سخن از زندگی نقره ای آوازیست
که سحرگاهان فواره کوچک میخواند
ما در آن جنگل سبز سیال
شبی از خر گوشان وحشی
و در آن دریای مضطرب خونسرد
از صدف های پر از مروارید
و در آن کوه غریب فاتح
از عقابان جوان پرسیدیم
که چه باید کرد
همه میدانند
همه میدانند

ما به خواب سرد و ساکت سیمرغان، ره یافته ایم
ما حقیقت را در باغچه پیدا کردم
در نگاه شرم آگین گلی گمنام
و بقا را در یک لحظه نامحدود
که دو خورشید به هم خیره شدند

سخن از پچ پچ ترسانی در ظلمت نیست
سخن از روزست و پنجره های باز
و هوای تازه
و اجاقی که در آن اشیاء بیهده میسوزند
و زمینی که ز کشتی دیگر بار ور است
و تولد و تکامل و غرور
سخن از دستان عاشق ماست
که پلی از پیغام عطر ونور و نسیم
بر فراز شبها ساخته اند

به چمنزار بیا
به چمنزار بزرگ
و صدایم کن، از پشت نفس های گل ابریشم
همچنان آهو که جفتش را

پرده ها از بغضی پنهانی سرشارند
و کبوترهای معصوم
از بلندی های برج سپید خود
به زمین مینگرند

Conquest of the Garden

That crow that flew
over our heads,
down through the disturbed thoughts of a vagrant cloud,
whose call crossed the breadth of the horizon
like a short spear,
will carry news of us to the city.

Everyone knows
everyone knows
that you and I saw the garden
from that cold, grim window,
and picked the apple

from that playful distant branch.

Everyone is afraid
everyone is afraid, but you and I
joined with the lamp and the water and the mirror
and we were not afraid.

I am not talking about the feeble joining
of two names,
or embracing in the old pages of a register.
I am talking about my fortunate hair
with the inflamed poppies of your kiss
and the brave intimacy of our bodies
and the gleaming of our nakedness
like fishes' scales in the water.
I am talking about the silvery life of a song
that a small fountain sings at dawn.

One night in the green flowing forest,
we asked the wild rabbits
and in that restless cold blooded sea
we asked the shells full of pearls
and on that strange victorious mountain
we asked the young eagles
what should be done.

We have found the way into the cold, silent dream
of phoenixes
We found truth in the garden,
in the shy look of a nameless flower
and eternity in an endless moment
when two suns gazed at each other.

I'm not talking about fearful whispering in the dark
I'm talking about daytime and open windows
and fresh air
and a stove that useless things burn in
and a land fertile with another planting
and birth and evolution and pride.
I'm talking about our loving hands
that have built a bridge across nights
from the message of fragrance and light and breeze.

Come to the meadow,
to the big meadow,
and call me from behind the breaths of the acacia
just as the deer calls its mate.

The curtains are overflowing with
hidden malice
and from the heights of their white tower
innocent doves
look to the ground.

وهم سبز

تمام روز در آئینه گریه میکردم
بهار پنجره ام را
به وهم سبز درختان سپرده بود
تنم به پیله تنهائیم نمیگنجید
و بوی تاج کاغذیم
فضای آن قلمروبی آفتاب را
آلوده کرده بود

نمیتوانستم، دیگر نمیتوانستم
صدای کوچه، صدای پرنده
صدای گمشدن توپهای ماهوتی
و هایهوی گریزان کودکان
و رقص بادکنکها
که چون حبابهای کف صابون
در انتهای ساقه ای از نخ صعود میکردند
و باد، باد که گوئی
در عمق گودترین لحظه های تیره همخوابگی نفس میزد
حصار قلعه خاموش اعتماد مرا
فشار میدادند
و از شکافهای کهنه، دلم را بنام میخواندند

تمام روز نگاه من
به چشمهای زندگیم خیره گشته بود
به آن دو چشم مضطرب ترسان
که از نگاه ثابت من میگریختند
و چون دروغگویان

به انزوای بی خطر پلکها پناه میآوردند

کدام قله کدام اوج؟
مگر تمامی این راه های پیچاپیچ
در آن دهان سرد مکنده
به نقطه تلاقی و پایان نمیرسند؟

به من چه دادید، ای واژه های ساده فریب
و ای ریاضت اندامها و خواهشها؟
اگر گلی به گیسوی خود میزدم
از این تقلب، از این تاج کاغذین
که بر فراز سرم بو گرفته است، فریبنده تر نبود؟

چگونه روح بیابان مرا گرفت
و سحر ماه ز ایمان گله دورم کرد!
چگونه ناتمامی قلبم بزرگ شد
و هیچ نیمه ای این نیمه را تمام نکرد!
چگونه ایستادم و دیدم
زمین به زیر دو پایم ز تکیه گاه تهی میشود
و گرمی تن جفتم
به انتظار پوچ تنم ره نمیبرد!

کدام قله کدام اوج؟
مرا پناه دهید ای چراغ های مشوش
ای خانه های روشن شکاک
که جامه های شسته در آغوش دودهای معطر
بر بامهای آفتابیتان تاب میخورند

مرا پناه دهید ای زنان ساده کامل
که از ورای پوست، سر انگشتهای نازکتان
مسیر خنبش کیف آورجنینی را
دنبال میکند
و در شکاف گریبانتان همیشه هوا
به بوی شیر تازه میامیزد

کدام قله کدام اوج؟
مرا پناه دهید ای اجاقهای پر آتش-
ای نعلهای خوشبختی-
و ای سرود ظرفهای مسین در سیاهکاری مطبخ
و ای ترنم دلگیر چرخ خیاطی
و ای جدال روز و شب فرشها و جاروها
مرا پناه دهید ای تمام عشقهای حریصی

که میل دردناک بقا بستر تصرفتان را
به آب جادو
و قطره های خون تازه میآراید

تمام روز تمام روز
رها شده، رها شده، چون لاشه ای بر آب
به سوی سهمناکترین صخره پیش میرفتم
به سوی ژرفترین غارهای دریائی
و گوشتخوارترین ماهیان
و مهره های نازک پشتم
از حس مرگ تیر کشیدند

نمیتوانستم دیگر نمیتوانستم
صدای پایم از انکار راه بر میخاست
و یأسم از صبوری روحم وسیعتر شده بود
و آن بهار، و آن وهم سبز رنگ
که بر دریچه گذر داشت، با دلم میگفت
"نگاه کن
تو هیچگاه پیش نرفتی
تو فرو رفتی."

Green Delusion

I cried in the mirror all day.
Spring had entrusted my window
to the trees' green delusion.
My body would not fit in the cocoon of my loneliness
and the smell of my paper crown
had polluted
the air of that sunless realm.

I couldn't anymore, I couldn't.
The sound of the street, the sound of birds,
the sound of tennis balls getting lost,
the fleeing clamor of children,
the dance of balloons
climbing on the ends of string stems
like soap bubbles,
and the wind, the wind,
as if breathing in the depths
of the deepest dark moments of lovemaking,
all were pressing

against the walls of the silent fortress of my confidence,
and through the old cracks, were calling my heart by name.

All day my gaze
was fixed on my life's eyes,
on those two anxious, fearful eyes
which fled from my steady gaze
and sought refuge in the safe seclusion of their lids
like liars.

Which peak, which summit?
Don't all these winding roads
meet and end
in that cold, sucking mouth?

O, simple words of deception,
O, denial of bodies and desires,
what did you give me?
If I put a flower in my own hair,
would it not be more enchanting
than this deceit, this paper crown
gone rank on my head?

How the spirit of the wilderness took me and the moon's magic distanced me
from the flock's faith!
How my heart's lack grew large,
and no half completed this half!
How I stood and saw
the support of the earth
empty beneath my feet
and the warmth of my mate's body
not fulfilling the vain anticipation of mine!

Which peak, which summit?
Give me refuge, o apprehensive lights,
o bright houses of doubt,
washed clothes fluttering in the embrace of fragrant smoke
on your sunny roofs.
Give me refuge, o simple, whole women,
whose delicate fingertips trace
the joyous movement of a fetus
beneath the skin,

air always mingling with the smell of fresh milk
in your open blouses.

Which peak, which summit?
Give me refuge, o hearths full of fire,
o good luck horseshoes,
O, song of copper pots in the sooty work of a kitchen,
O, sad hum of the sewing machine,
O, day and night struggle of carpets and brooms

Give me shelter, o greedy loves all,
whose painful thirst for eternity
adorns your bed of possession
with magical water
and drops of fresh blood.

All day, all day
forsaken, forsaken like a corpse on the water,
I moved toward the most terrifying rock,
toward the deepest cave of the sea,
and the most carnivorous fish
and the delicate vertebrae of my back
spasmed at the sense of death.

I couldn't anymore, I couldn't
The sound of my footsteps rose from the denial of the road
my despair had grown larger than the endurance of my soul,
and that spring, that green delusion
passing the window, said to my heart,
"Look
you never advanced;
you descended."

نم قوش‌عم

معشوق من
با آن تن برهنه بی شرم
بر ساقهای نیرومندش

چون مرگ ایستاد

خط های بیقرار مورّب
اندامهای عاصی اورا
در طرح استوارش
دنبال میکنند

معشوق من
گوئی ز نسلهای فراموشی گشته است
گوئی که تاتاری
در انتهای چشمانش
پیوسته در کمین سواریست
گوئی که بربری
در برق پر طراوت دندانهایش
مجذوب خون گرم شکاریست

معشوق من
همچون طبیعت
مفهوم ناگزیر صریحی دارد
او با شکست من
قانون صادقانه قدرت را
تأیید میکند

او وحشیانه آزادست
مانند یک غریزه سالم
درعمق یک جزیره نامسکون

او پاک میکند
با پاره های خیمه مجنون
از کفش خود، غبار خیابان را

معسوق من
همچون خداوندی در معبد نپال
گوئی از ابتدای وجودش
بیگانه بوده است
او
مردیست از قرون گذشته
یاد آور اصالت زیبائی

او در فضای خود
چون بوی کودکی
پیوسته خاطرات معصومی را

بیدار میکند
او مثل یک سرود خوش عامیانه است
سرشار از خشونت و عریانی

او با خلوص دوست میدارد
ذرات زندگی را
ذرات خاک را
غمهای آدمی را
غمهای پاک را
او با خلوص دوست میدارد
یک کوچه باغ دهکده را
یک درخت را
یک ظرف بستنی را
یک بند رخت را

معشوق من
انسان ساده ایست
انسان ساده ای که من او را
در سر زمین شوم عجایب
چون آخرین نشانه یک مذهب شگفت
در لابلای بوته پستانهایم
پنهان نموده ام

My Lover

My lover,
with that naked shameless body,
stands on mighty feet
like death.
Slanting, restless lines
trace his rebellious limbs
in their constant patterns.

My lover
seems to have come from forgotten generations
as if in the depths of his eyes
a Tartar is always
lying in ambush for a horseman,
as if in the vital flash of his teeth,
a barbarian
is held rapt by the warm blood of prey.
My lover,

like nature, has a blunt, inevitable meaning.
In conquering me,
he confirms
the forthright law of power.

He is savagely free,
like a healthy instinct
deep in an uninhabited island.
My lover,
like a god in a Nepalese temple,
seems to be a stranger
to the beginnings of his existence.
He
is a man of centuries past,
a reminder of beauty's authenticity.

In his own environment,
he constantly awakens
innocent memories,
like the smell of a child.
Like a glad folk song,
he is naked and rough.

He honestly loves
the atoms of life,
the atoms of dust,
human sorrows,
utter sorrows.

He honestly loves
a village garden path,
a tree,
a dish of ice cream,
a clothesline.

My lover
is a simple person,
a simple person whom I,
in this strange ominous land,
have hidden in the thicket of my breasts
like the last oracle of a wondrous religion.

تولدی دیگر

همه هستی من آیه تاریکیست
که ترا در تکرارکنان
به سحرگاه شگفتن ها و رستن های ابدی خواهد برد
من در این آیه ترا آه کشیدم، آه
من در این آیه ترا
به درخت و آب و آتش پیوند زدم

زندگی شاید
یک خیابان درازست که هر روز زنی با زنبیلی از آن میگذرد
زندگی شاید
ریسمانیست که مردی با آن خود را از شاخه میآویزد
زندگی شاید طفلیست که از مدرسه بر میگردد
زندگی شاید افروختن سیگاری باشد، در فاصله رخوتناک دو همآغوشی
یا عبور گیج رهگذری باشد
که کلاه از سر بر میدارد
و به یک رهگذر دیگر با لبخندی بی معنی میگوید "صبح بخیر"
زندگی شاید آن لحظه مسدودیست
که نگاه من، در نی نی چشمان تو خود را ویران میسازد
و در این حسی است
که من آنرا با ادراک ماه و با در یافت ظلمت خواهم آمیخت

در اتاقی که به اندازه یک تنهائیست
دل من
که به اندازه یک عشقست
به بهانه های ساده خوشبختی خود مینگرد
به زوال زیبای گل ها در گلدان
به نهالی که تو در باغچه خانه مان کاشته ای
و به آواز قناری ها
که به اندازه یک پنجره میخوانند

آه...
سهم من اینست
مهم من اینست
سهم من،
آسمانیست که آویختن پرده ای آنرا از من میگیرد

سهم من پائین رفتن از یک پله متروکست
و به چیزی در پوسیدگی و غربت واصل گشتن
سهم من گردش حزن آلودی در باغ خاطره هاست
و در اندوه صدائی جان دادن که به من میگوید:

"دستهایت را
دوست میدارم"

دستهایم را در باغچه میکارم
سبز خواهم شد، میدانم، میدانم، میدانم
و پرستوها در گودی انگشتان جوهریم
تخم خواهند گذاشت

گوشواری به دو گوشم میآویزم
از دو گیلاس سرخ همزاد
و به ناخن هایم برگ گل کوکب میچسبانم
کوچه ای هست که در آنجا
پسرانی که به من عاشق بودند، هنوز
با همان موهای در هم و گردن های باریک و پاهای لاغر
به تبسم های معصوم دخترکی میاندیشند که یکشب او را
باد با خود برد

کوچه ای هست که قلب من آنرا
از محله های کودکیم دزدیده ست

سفر حجمی در خط زمان
و به حجمی خط خشک زمان را آبستن کردن
حجمی از تصویری آگاه
که ز مهمانی یک آینه بر میگردد

و بدینسانست
که کسی میمیرد
و کسی میماند

هیچ صیادی در جوی حقیری که به گودالی میریزد مروارید صید نخواهد کرد.

من
پری کوچک غمگینی را
میشناسم که در اقیانوسی مسکن دارد
و دلش را در یک نی لبک چوبین
مینوازد آرام، آرام
پری کوچک غمگینی
که شب از یک بوسه میمیرد
و سحرگاه از یک بوسه به دنیا خواهد آمد

Another Birth

My whole being is a dark chant
that will carry you
perpetuating you
to the dawn of eternal growths and blossomings.
In this chant I sighed you, sighed
in this chant
I grafted you to the tree,
to the water, to the fire.

Life is perhaps
a long street through which a woman holding a basket
passes every day.

Life is perhaps
a rope with which a man hangs himself from a branch.
Life is perhaps a child returning home from school.
Life is perhaps lighting up a cigarette
in the narcotic repose between two lovemakings
or the absent gaze of a passerby
who takes off his hat to another passerby
with a meaningless smile and a good morning.

Life is perhaps that enclosed moment
when my gaze destroys itself in the pupil of your eyes
and it is in the feeling
which I will put into the Moon's perception
and the Night's impression.

In a room as big as loneliness
my heart
which is as big as love
looks at the simple pretexts of its happiness
at the beautiful decay of flowers in the vase
at the saplings you planted in our garden
and the song of canaries
that sing to the size of a window.

Ah…
this is my lot
this is my lot

my lot is a sky that is taken away
        at the drop of a curtain

My lot is going down a flight of disused stairs
to regain something amid putrification and nostalgia.
My lot is a sad promenade in the garden of memories
and dying in the grief of a voice that tells me
I love
your hands.

I will plant my hands in the garden
I will grow,
I know, I know, I know,
and swallows will lay eggs
in the hollow of my ink-stained hands.

I shall wear
twin cherries as earrings
and I shall put dahlia petals on my fingernails.

There is an alley
where the boys who were in love with me
still loiter with the same unkempt hair,
        thin necks and bony legs
and think of the innocent smiles of a little girl
who was blown away by the wind one night.

There is an alley that my heart has stolen
from the streets of my childhood.

The journey of a form along the line of time
and inseminating the line of time with the form,
a form conscious of an image
returning from a feast in the mirror.

And it is in this way
that someone dies
and someone lives on.

No fisherman shall ever find a pearl in a small brook that empties into a pool

I know a sad little fairy

who lives in an ocean
and ever so softly
plays her heart into a magic flute
a sad little fairy
who dies with one kiss each night
and is reborn with one kiss each dawn.

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